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***Listen
to the Mocking Words***



*A Medley of Anecdotes
about Music and Musicians*

C o m p i l e d b y
D A V I D E W E N
I l l u s t r a t e d b y
A . B I R N B A U M

**Listen
king Words**

ARCO PUBLISHING COMPANY

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

A professional writer on music inevitably has a storehouse of anecdotes from which he draws continually to enliven his writings. If he is frank, he will confess that he has stocked that storehouse not only with his own harvest, but also with loot: not only with things he has himself seen or heard in his varied contacts, but also with gleanings from what he has read, with quips and jests of uncertain origin so widely circulated that they now belong in the public domain.

Over a period of more than fifteen years, I have made a practice of jotting down musical oddities: the idiosyncrasies of the great and the near-great, their unusual relationships, their foibles and peculiarities, their wit, their malice. Thus I have gathered in my files a repertoire of odd stories, strange stories and, I hope, amusing stories of music—its makers, its manglers, and its masters. Some of these I have used in my books. Others I have contributed to magazines. Still others I have never before published.

At my publisher's request I have gathered some of the material I like best into a volume that the music lover can read in one sitting or in snatches; a book intended not so much for education or enlightenment as for amusement. As a potpourri of anecdotes, and a compilation of short articles on unusual topics, this book has only a single *raison-d'être*: entertainment.

I am indebted to *Coronet*, *Facts*, *Read, This Month*, *Musical America* and *Etude* for pieces of mine which originally appeared (in one form or another) in their pages, but which I have revised for the purposes of this book.

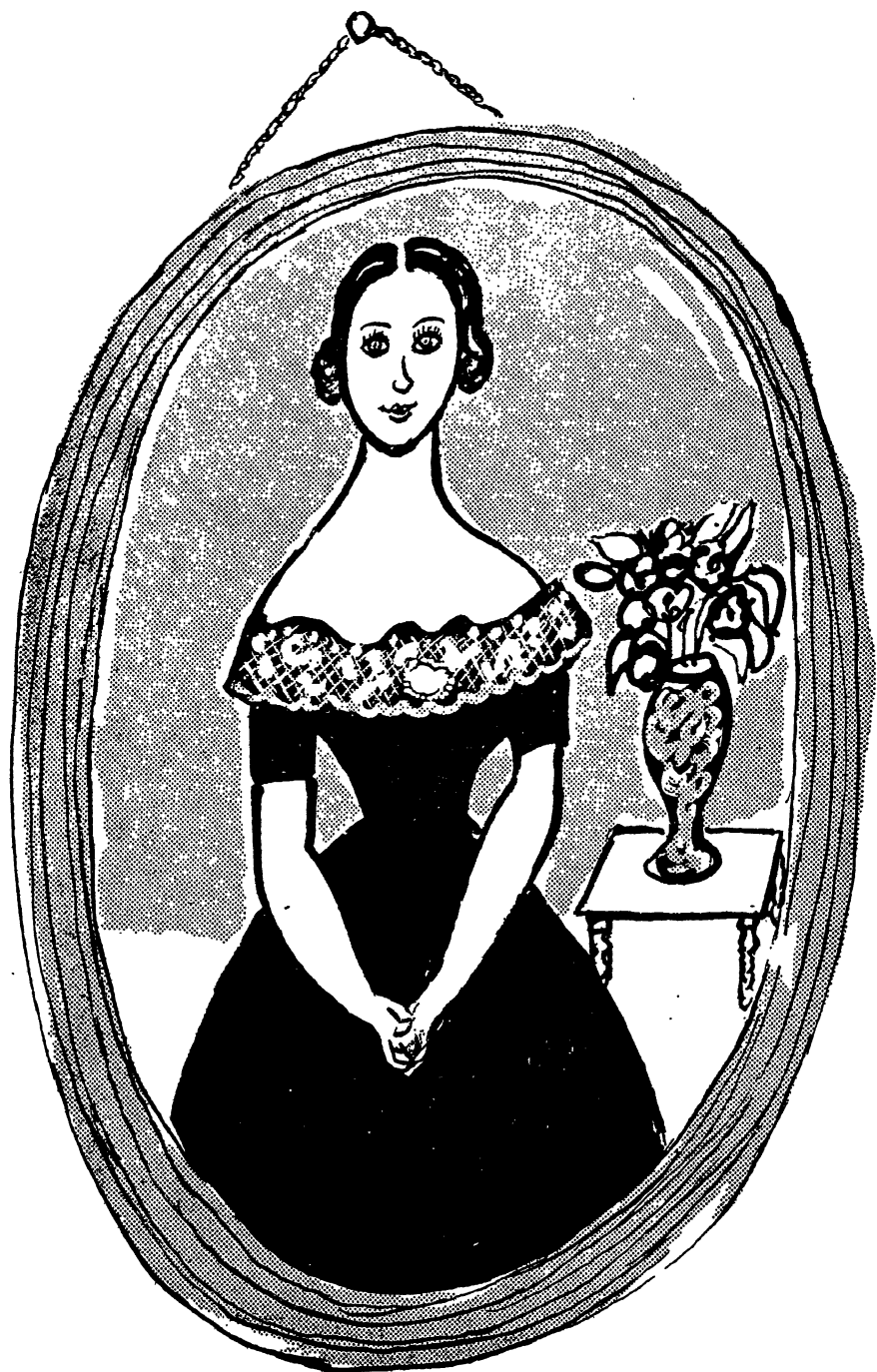
For the right to reprint material first published elsewhere, I would like to express my gratitude to the following publishers: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., for three brief quotations from Oscar Levant's *A Smattering of Ignorance*; E. P. Dutton & Co., for a couplet from Laurence McKinney's *People Of Note*; Henry Holt & Co., for a

limerick and one brief quotation from Elizabeth C. Moore's *An Almanac for Music-Lovers*; Charles Scribner's Sons for a brief quotation from *The Paderewski Memoirs*.

David Ewen

1

A m e r i c a n a



Jonny Lind

When We Were Very Young

EARLY in 1850, Jenny Lind arrived in America, the first great European artist to tour this country. It was typical of the period here that she came under the managerial wing of Phineas T. Barnum. Typical, too, was the fact that she was exploited like one of Barnum's pet circus freaks. Local singing societies and fire-department bands were hired to serenade her each evening beneath her hotel-room window. Her carriage was drawn by spirited white steeds wherever she went. Fabulous tales of her virtue, goodness, and personal exploits (quite irrelevant to her art) were created expressly for this American visit.

Jenny Lind soon became a legend, a vogue, a disease. Clothing, food, restaurants, knickknacks were named after her. Young women imitated her hair-dress; and the kind of clothing she wore set the fashion. When, therefore, Jenny Lind attracted capacity audiences to the concert hall, it was not only because of her magnificent voice but also her glamorized personality. Americans of a century ago came not to hear music but to gaze at a legendary figure.

In short, Lind was little more than a circus attraction in an age that looked upon a musical performance as a species of circus. When Americans went to the concert hall, they usually demanded spectacle, display, eccentricity. And that's what they got. The concert activity of a hundred years ago (or even less) consisted for the most part of Barnum-like attractions.

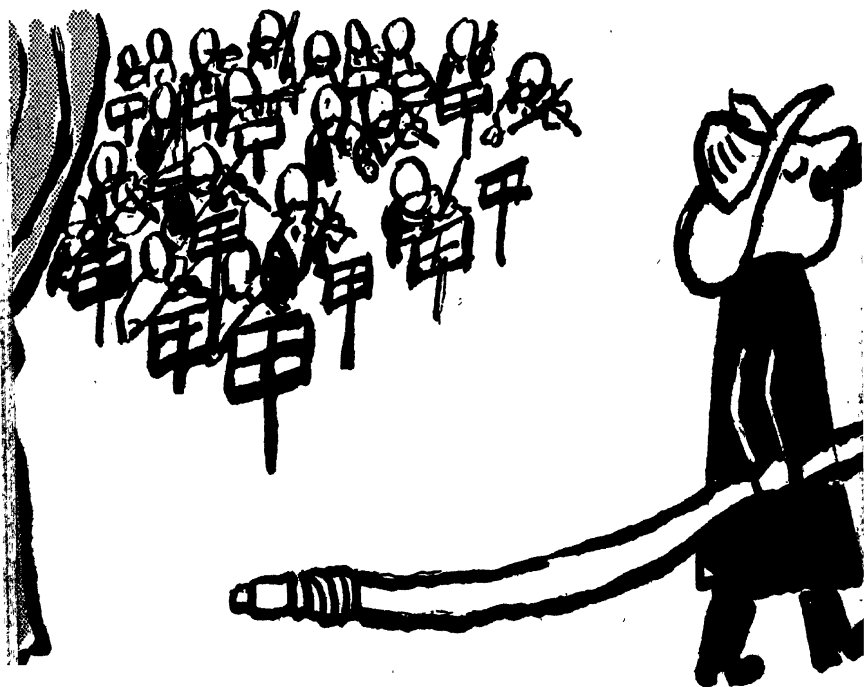
A concert pianist named Hatton had a sleigh bell, attached to his ankle, which he would jingle to accompany the music he was performing. In some numbers, he was accompanied by an assistant who appeared with an instrument that made a sound like the cracking of a whip. Such artistry would (in the words of Dwight's *Journal of Music*) "arouse a storm of applause which had no end."

A highly publicized pianist, Volovski, brought audiences to his concerts with the promise that he could play 450 bars of music in one minute.

Leopold de Meyer performed on the piano with fists, elbows, and even a cane; and another pianist, Henri Herz, brilliantly scaled Parnassus by advertising that at each of his concerts there would be the added attraction of illumination by one thousand candles.

Suave Louis Gottschalk used to fascinate the ladies both by his piano playing and by the air with which he would remove his white gloves and fling them into the audience before performing. Good and respectable ladies would belabor each other mightily for the possession of these precious souvenirs.

The celebrated Patrick Gilmore really conducted his band with *éclat*, often resorting to real cannon. In 1869, a performance of Verdi's



Anvil Chorus in Boston called for 50 red-shirted firemen who struck on actual anvils as the music was played. This was accompanied by pealing bells and booming cannon (the latter regulated by keys on Gilmore's stand).

A great orchestral favorite of the time was a piece called *The Fireman's Quadrille*, heard on programs which also included music by Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. As the music was performed, the clang of firebells was heard offstage. Suddenly, firemen in full regalia appeared on the platform, pouring actual water from actual firehoses on a simulated fire. The music came to a burning climax as the firemen marched triumphantly off the stage.

Another popular number was *The Battle of Prague*, a cacophonous work which made much use of tin pans, rattles, and any other percussive contrivance capable of emitting noise.



It was quantity, not quality, that drew the crowds to concerts. There was nothing unusual in a performance by an orchestra numbering several hundred, or by a chorus aggregating a thousand or more voices. The Chicago World's Fair advertised the fact that Theodore Thomas would conduct "the largest orchestra ever to assemble on one stage." At the Boston Jubilee of 1869, and again in 1872, the orchestra numbered a thousand musicians, while the singers totaled ten thousand. At the 1872 affair, the waltz-king Johann Strauss was the guest conductor of his waltzes. He has left us his somewhat dazed impression of the event: "On the musicians' tribune were twenty thousand singers; in front of them the members of the orchestra. . . . A hundred assistant conductors had been placed at my disposal to control these gigantic masses."

Recitals by a single artist had little appeal. Even artists of the stature of Jenny Lind, Anton Rubinstein, or Henri Vieuxtemps had to appear on programs featuring numerous other artists and attractions. Vieuxtemps once participated in a program which included the talent of an accordionist who delighted his audience by crushing his instrument on his nose or forehead.

Once when the great pianist Anton Rubinstein was in Memphis for a recital, he was approached, just before the program was to begin, by the concert-hall manager who nervously suggested that it was high time for him to blacken his face—on the assumption that Rubinstein was a minstrel performer.

Accident sometimes provided concertgoers with thrills. Reményi, who delighted Americans with his fiddle pyrotechnics, once amazed his public by seemingly drawing a full, clear, sustained note in crescendo from his violin while going through the complexities of his transcription of the funeral music from Handel's *Saul*. The music lovers of the time were awed by this feat. Reményi never revealed the secret: during the violin number someone backstage had gone to the pipe organ and sounded the sustained note throughout the performance.

Chamber music did not go well in those days. When William Mason's quartet was due to give a chamber-music concert, he used to stand outside his hall, hours before concert-time, distributing handbills advertising the affair.

One of the greatest of string quartet ensembles in America was the Kneisel. "Too bad," remarked one kind old lady to Franz Kneisel, "too bad that you can't afford to have a full orchestra, instead of only four players!"

In street-cars, the Kneisels were often stopped and asked what dance they were on their way to play for. On explaining that they were *concert* artists, they usually encountered only quizzical skepticism.

In some towns, the Kneisels were bitterly criticized because they didn't play "salon pieces." Sometimes local ignorance bordered on the whimsical. At the end of one of their concerts, they were implored by a member of the audience to give "an all-Wagner program." How a string quartet could be expected to play a program of Wagner music, the helpful enthusiast did not stop to explain.

In the early years of the Flonzaley Quartet, they too would play in half-empty halls. One of their members suggested coming out on the stage on bicycles in order to attract *some* attention.

It was at a concert of the Flonzaley Quartet that a woman approached the second violinist and begged to look at his instrument. "Why," she remarked with amazement after a careful inspection, "it looks exactly like a first violin!"

Another Westerner was rather proud of his resonant bass voice, which he never hesitated to employ, preferably in fortissimo. A friend told him one day: "Last night, I had a remarkable dream. I heard a mighty choir—5,000 sopranos, 5,000 altos, and 5,000 tenors, all singing at the top of their voices. *You* were singing bass, and—you know—the conductor kept turning to you and pleading, 'Not quite so loud in the bass, please!'"

President Ulysses S. Grant used to say: "I know only two tunes. One of them is *Yankee Doodle*. The other isn't."

After performing Handel's *Largo*, the conductor of a small orchestra was approached by an old lady who asked him to do her the very personal favor of playing Handel's *Largo*. "But we have *just* performed it, madam!" the conductor answered politely. "Now isn't that too bad?" the lady said with obvious disappointment. "I wish I had known. It's my *favorite* piece."

A Western millionaire engaged a symphony orchestra to give a concert at his new country place. The program was not very far along before the conductor was brought a note from his employer: "The music is so loud that it interferes with our conversation. Please play something in a minor key."

N i g h t s a t t h e O p e r a

CONVERSATION in the boxes of the Metropolitan Opera House was so prevalent a few decades ago that the management had to post notices begging the occupants to be silent during the performance.

One society woman was particularly notorious for chatting incessantly while the music was going on. She invited a casual friend to attend a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* with her. "I'd love to," her friend answered. "I never heard you in *Tristan*!"

Asked why she habitually came to the opera when it bored her to tears, another society woman answered: "Because I have to do *something* until it's time to go *somewhere*!"

Operagoers of the time were as often guilty of bad taste as of bad manners. At one time, the socialites insisted that the Metropolitan present the third act of *Die Meistersinger* before the first, because "it



was the only act that had real music in it," and most boxholders left the opera house before the third act. One lady begged the management to shift the aria "Celeste Aïda" from the first act to the second because, coming habitually late, she always missed it.

Some of these fashionable devotees objected to dark scenes; they said they were too depressing. They made their objections felt so strongly that the management had to present many somber scenes in full light. Thus in *Fidelio*, Florestan, on a stage bathed in light, exclaimed, "God, how dark it is here!"

In El Paso, in the 1900s, a visiting opera company presented *The Barber of Seville* with a few minor cuts. A musician in the audience chanced to remark that deletions had been made. In a few moments, his remark had spread throughout the opera house like contagion. A riot developed among the outraged music lovers who thought they were being cheated. The sheriff was called. Texan gunmen surrounded the bewildered impresario. And the commotion did not subside until it was announced that the price of admission would be refunded immediately.

When Henry Russell founded the Boston Opera Company, he was resolved to resort to sensation. Coincidentally with his presentation of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Russell announced through the press that the author of the play, Maurice Maeterlinck (who never allowed interviews) would honor America with his presence on the occasion of the performance. Russell offered a prize of \$1,000 to any journalist clever enough to wangle an interview with the famous Belgian author. Of course, Maeterlinck had no intention of coming to America; and Russell knew it. In any case, Russell's prize put the hounds on edge, set them straining at the leash, created nationwide interest. Every boat was carefully watched for Maeterlinck. Every man with a beard, a brow, or a possible brain had a truly terrible time. He was scrutinized, catechized, harassed and chased. By the time *Pelléas* was performed, interest in Maeterlinck had risen sufficiently high to sell the house out completely. Many came to that performance just to participate in the new game of "Find Maeterlinck."

After the second performance of *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Boston Opera, some of the more voracious customers demanded their money back because they had expected a double feature, like *Pagliacci* and *Cavalleria Rusticana*—the first half of the evening *Pelléas*, and the second half *Mélisande*, of course. . . .

It cost Oscar Hammerstein a fortune to launch opera at the Manhattan Opera House in competition with the Metropolitan. Somebody

once asked him why he had gone into opera at all. "Is there any money in it?" "Of course," answered Hammerstein; "My money is in it."

The Metropolitan once ran a testimonial dinner for its new director, Gatti-Casazza, and invited Oscar Hammerstein to attend. He did not go, and, when asked why, he explained airily that he hadn't been hungry at the time.

Oscar Hammerstein once bet the operetta composer, Gustave Kerker, a hundred dollars that he (Hammerstein) could write the music and libretto of an opera in 48 hours. Kerker took the bet. Then, after Hammerstein had engaged a hotel room and set to work, Kerker hired a hurdy-gurdy player to perform under the hotel window for two consecutive days and nights. In spite of this interference, Hammerstein actually composed the opera—*Koh-i-Noor*. Kerker tried to welsh on the bet, saying the opera was terrible. Hammerstein, however, insisted that its quality had not been involved in the wager. Besides, the impresario thought the opera rather good, and decided to produce it to prove his point. It ran one week at the Harlem Opera House, grossing \$400, and Hammerstein lost a fortune on the venture. But he never again raised the subject of the bet nor tried to collect the \$100 from Kerker.

It is not often that an opera is banned on moral grounds. However, the première of Richard Strauss's *Salome* at the Metropolitan Opera House on January 22, 1907, was such a *cause célèbre*.

The trouble started when the management injudiciously decided to hold the dress rehearsal on a Sunday. Many of the audience had come straight from church, and the plunge into the "lewd" spectacle of Oscar Wilde's lascivious play combined with Richard Strauss's sensuous music was too much for them.

After the first performance, the storm broke. Clergymen, educators, even music critics denounced the opera as a cesspool of sin. "The stench of Oscar Wilde's play has filled the nostrils of humanity," wrote Krehbiel about the libretto; another critic described the opera as a "decadent and pestiferous work." "As to the mind and morals, they are diseased,"

wrote still another critic. "Not to emphasize disgust, their state was one of decomposition far advanced. As to the music, it fits. It makes worse that to which nothing but music could give added degradation."

Before the second performance could be put on the stage, the Metropolitan directors decided upon discretion. They announced that they considered "the performance of *Salome* objectionable, and detrimental to the best interests of the Metropolitan Opera House," and forbade further performances.

He Sold Music to America

ON A hot day in July 1845, a ten-year-old immigrant arrived in this country from Germany. His only belongings were the suit of clothes he wore, and the violin he held tightly under his arm. Before he had been in this country very long, he began earning his living with that violin. He played wherever there was an honest coin to be earned: in saloons and theaters, at weddings and funerals. He undertook a concert tour of the South—pretty much a one-man affair. Not only did he give the concert and take care of its management, but he also drew up his own billboard posters and distributed them, acted the cashier immediately before his performance, and helped to sweep up the hall afterwards.

The young fellow's name was Theodore Thomas, and he was the man who was later to sell symphonic music to America. For the early history of our orchestral activity is *his* story as well.

He became first violinist in the orchestra conducted by the eccentric Jullien. A few years later, in 1858, he made his debut as a conductor, directing a performance of Halévy's *La Juive* at the Academy of Music in New York. Then he organized the orchestra on a sound and permanent basis so that his men might be able to devote themselves to their orchestral duties—an orchestra-man who did not have to fill half a dozen other jobs in order to earn his living was unknown in America

at the time; and he decided to take it to every part of the country. Thus the famous "Thomas Road" was initiated, a road that stretched from one end of the country to the other, every inch paved with good music.

Temperamentally, Theodore Thomas was well fitted for the thankless job of selling good music to people who knew virtually nothing about it. He tempered his idealism with a sound practical sense. A born teacher, he knew he would accomplish nothing if he did not cater to his public, make continual concessions. He used to say that you couldn't educate audiences to music if they didn't come to your concerts in the first place.

He did not give them the greatest music all at once. The first job he set for himself was to make his concerts appealing: He played plenty of waltzes, quadrilles, and salon music—but always, with them, one or two movements from the great symphonies. He went in for dramatics in a big way. While playing a polka in the open-air Terrace Garden in New York, he had two flutists hide in the trees and play their solo parts there. An overconscientious if somewhat unimaginative cop once tried to chase the musicians out of the trees. "We can't have such goings-on!" he shouted. "Don't you know there's a concert taking place?"

While playing Schumann's *Träumerei* (which in some parts of the country Thomas popularized to a point where it became a "hit"), he finished it *pianissimo*, then had the violinists draw their bows across the strings without touching them. The audience was thus led to believe that it was hearing the softest sound human hands could produce!

He had infinite patience, indomitable perseverance, and the kind of stout heart that refuses to admit defeat or even discouragement. And it took all these to keep up his spirits in the face of America's sublime ingenuousness where good music was concerned. In St. Louis, one of the men in the audience begged Thomas to play a light number, "say, something by Palestrina"—unaware that Palestrina happens to have written highly complex choral music.

In Iowa, Thomas played Boccherini's *Minuet*, and (as directed in the score) took it quietly, with muted strings. "Oh, but you ought to have played it real loud," the mayor of the town told him afterward. "A beautiful piece like that *deserves* to be played loud!"

In Kansas one music lover told Thomas that what had impressed him most in the orchestra's performance was the way the men turned over the leaves of their music *all at the same time*.

In another town, a local manager insisted that Thomas couldn't expect anything like a crowd at his concert unless he utilized the services of good "end-men."

In a city down south, the floor of the auditorium was cleared after a Thomas concert because the management was sure the orchestra could be prevailed upon to play some dance music for the admiring and patient but rather restless audience.

Out west, a captious cowboy entertained himself during the playing of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony by aiming streams of tobacco juice at the bald head of a double-bass player whose creditable performance hardly merited such devastating criticism.

Not even the music critics were much better informed. In Keokuk, Iowa, Thomas conducted a program including Wagner's *Tannhäuser* Overture, the second movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and Weber's *Invitation to the Dance*. The last-named work was to be played in Berlioz' orchestral arrangement, and the phrase "adapted for orchestra by Berlioz" was printed on the program in parentheses beneath the Weber title. The Keokuk critic, however, imagined that this phrase applied to all three compositions, and he wrote the following classic criticism: "The first piece was that fine trilogy which Hector Berlioz with exquisite art made from Wagner, Beethoven, and Weber. The thought of Hector Berlioz, evidently, in arranging the trilogy was to put after the passionate action of the one, the ocean-like, star-like, measureless calm of the symphony. After you have bathed in that luxury and languor long enough, there comes Weber's *Invitation to the Dance*. Oh, there has been nothing heard in Keokuk like this trilogy!"

Such incidents were everyday events in Thomas's early American career as a wandering minstrel. He took them in stride, rarely losing his temper or his sense of humor. And all the while he kept on giving his concerts, playing the bad with the good, confident that if the public heard orchestral music long enough it would become discriminating.

He did not always pamper his audiences. As he grew more sure of them, he began to treat them with stern discipline, giving them lessons which often they preferred not to take.

In 1872, he played Wagner's "Liebestod" from *Tristan und Isolde*, the first time the work had been presented in this country. It fell flat. The concertmaster suggested to Thomas that perhaps it would be wiser not to play Wagner any more because "the audience didn't like it." "On the contrary," Thomas insisted, "we'll keep on playing Wagner until they *do* like it!"

At the first Cincinnati Music Festival in 1872, he told the committee: "When I begin playing Handel's *Te Deum*, close the doors and admit nobody until the first part is finished. When I play Offenbach or *Yankee Doodle* you can keep the doors open. But for *Te Deum* they must remain shut. Those who really appreciate music will be there on time. To the others it makes little difference how much they miss."

In New York, there was often bitter opposition to his insistence on playing new music. In rebellion, the audience noisily interfered with a performance of Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz*. Thomas took out his watch and announced that he would wait exactly five minutes for all those antagonistic to new music to leave the hall. A deathlike silence followed, after which the Liszt work was listened to respectfully.

He was not above teaching his audience good manners. At an outdoor performance of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, one young man in the front row was noisily striking a match to light his cigar. Thomas signaled to his men to stop playing and, turning to the disturber, smiled sweetly at him and said: "Go on, sir—don't mind *us*—we can wait until *you* are through."

On another occasion, when two people were talking loudly and uninterruptedly through the playing of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream Overture, Thomas signaled to the drummer to sound a long, thunderous roll. In the stunned silence that followed, Thomas turned and fixed a sternly accusing glare on the culprits, who promptly froze into silence.

F a b u l o u s H o l l y w o o d

SOME Hollywood executives and producers are palpably misinformed on musical chronology or else they have an exaggerated idea of the power of a Hollywood contract.

Nor does Hollywood have a very high opinion of the fame of some of our greatest musicians.

When Igor Stravinsky demanded \$2,000 a week for his services, a startled executive exclaimed: "Why, for *that* kind of money I can get *Al Newman!*"

Then there was the time Samuel Goldwyn negotiated with Jascha Heifetz for his screen appearance. Upon Heifetz' demanding what Goldwyn thought was an excessive fee, the mogul said: "Money isn't everything, Mr. Heifetz—I can make you *famous!*"

Great music is something of a mysterious world to the great men of Hollywood, a world in which they try hard to move familiarly—frequently with appalling results.

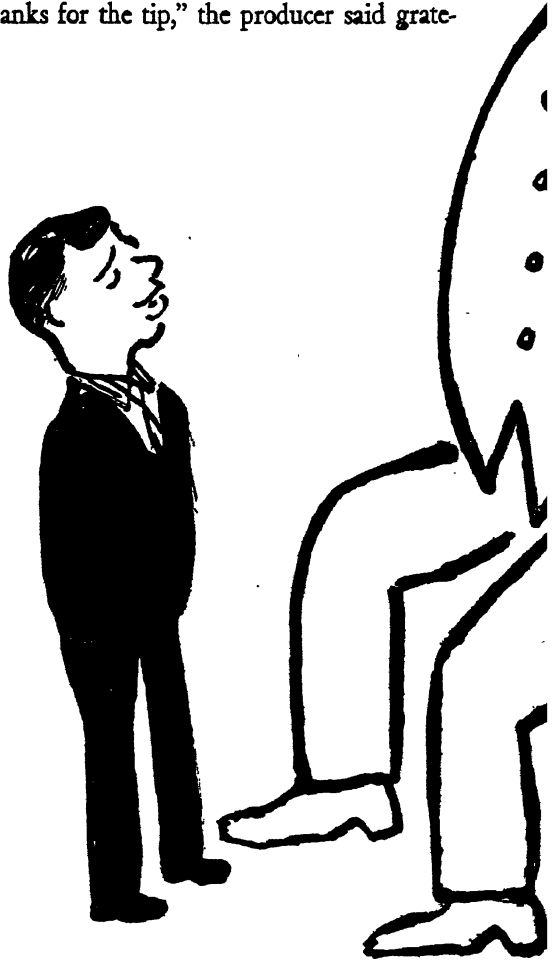
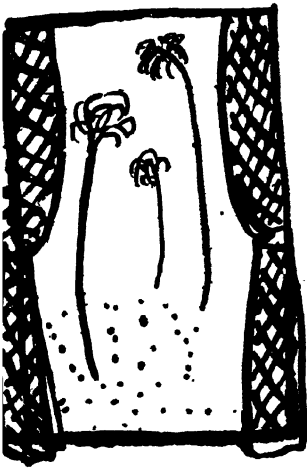
One composer, preparing a score for a Deanna Durbin picture, was instructed to make his music sound "like Wagner—only louder."

There was the producer who, eager to have a greater lightness and deftness injected into the music for a French comedy, insisted that the composer use "more French horns."

One of the executives shouted with joy when he heard he could get Maurice Ravel to do the music for one of his films—taking Ravel for one-half of that successful song-writing team, Gordon and Revel.



Oscar Levant mischievously told another producer that a competitive studio was thinking of taking an option on Dvořák's *Symphony from the New World*. "Thanks for the tip," the producer said gratefully. "We'll outbid them."



When *Fantasia* was still fantasy in the minds of Stokowski and Disney, the former suggested that they film Bach's *Toccata and Fugue*. "Fine!" was Disney's response. "*You* take care of the music, and let our writers worry over what story to use." It was his notion, apparently, that "Toccata and Fugue" were a pair of romantic lovers like Héloïse and Abélard, or Pelléas and Mélisande, or Romeo and Juliet.

But the composers don't always understand the producers, either. Irving Thalberg tried to convince Arnold Schönberg to write the music for *The Good Earth*. "What a score *that* would make!" Thalberg exclaimed. "The story has a storm—an earthquake, during which O-Lan gives birth to a baby—a plague of locusts. . . ." "With so much happening," asked Schönberg, "why do you need any music?"

The philosophy of the Hollywood composer was summed up by one of them. Assigned to do a full score in a few days, he was pitied by a friend, who remarked: "It'll take an awful lot out of you." "Not out of *me*," answered the composer; "out of Tchaikovsky, Brahms, and Dvořák."

The Paradox of War Songs

THOUGH songs aplenty have been written in connection with World War II, some enjoying wide popularity, the really "great song" of that war hasn't yet appeared. If history is any criterion, it is altogether possible that the song which future generations will associate with the present conflict will have nothing whatever to do with the war itself. Looking back through the years, we discover the curious fact that certain of the best-known songs today identified with our past wars were actually written for quite other occasions and at other periods. So gen-

eral is this rule that *Over There*, composed by George M. Cohan for World War I, stands forth as a striking and almost unique exception.

Yankee Doodle, customarily associated with the Revolutionary War, actually started life not in 1776 but many years earlier during the French and Indian Wars. It was a derisive song originated by the British Regulars at the expense of the shabbily uniformed Colonial soldiers recruited to fight alongside them. The Colonials never forgot the sting of its satire, and when they themselves rose in rebellion against the British they appropriated it for use as one of their own battle songs.

The war song of 1812, of course, was what has since become our national anthem. Though Francis Scott Key's words were written by the rockets' red glare, the tune itself is far older—an 18th-century English tune entitled *To Anacreon in Heaven*, originally composed as a rousing drinking song for a men's singing society in London.

Some of the most famous tunes of the Civil War were *not* written originally to incite the opposing armies to greater hatred. *Dixie*, surely the most famous song of the South, was actually written by a Northerner—and as a walk-around for a minstrel show. Dan Emmett, its composer, was so horrified at the use to which his innocent minstrel tune was being put during the Civil War that he wrote other lyrics for it, violently denouncing the Confederacy; but even this fact failed to lessen its popularity in the South. On the other hand, the favorite song in the North, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, had been—or rather, its music had been—popular with firemen and Negro congregations long before the Civil War. What transformed it into a stirring martial song was Julia Howe's flaming poetry.

Two songs often associated with the Spanish-American War were composed years before that conflict broke out. *When Johnny Comes Marching Home* dates from the Civil War. *A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight* (current among our troops in Cuba, and subsequently adopted as their own by Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders) was originally inspired by a fire in Old Town, Louisiana, and became popular in Heath and McIntyre's minstrel shows.

R a d i o W o n d e r l a n d

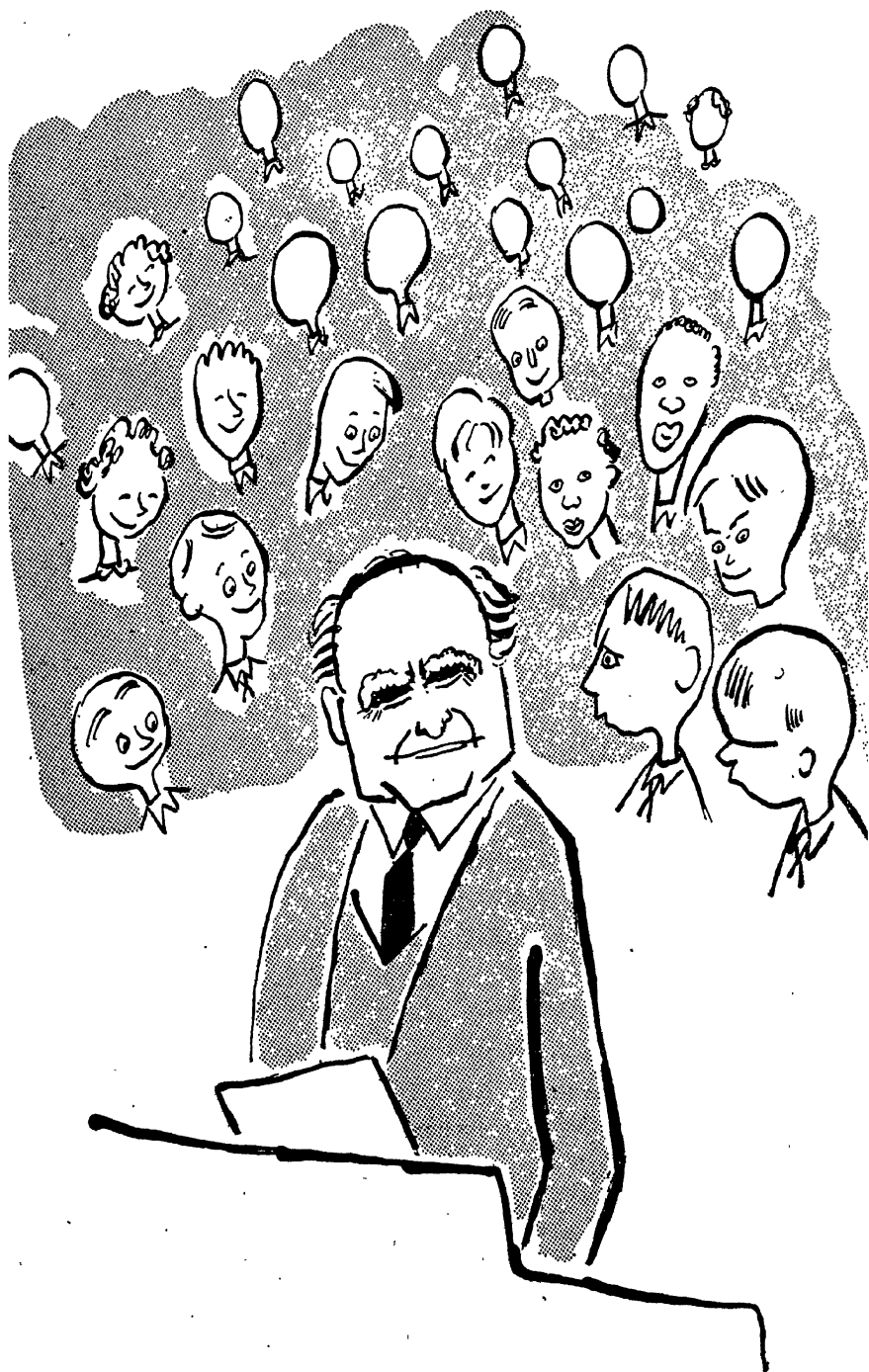
IT WAS during the early squealing days of the radio that one sensitive musician remarked, "This is De Forest's prime evil."

Jascha Heifetz, scheduled to make a broadcast, was trying to penetrate the rather carefully guarded doors of the NBC studios. "But I'm Heifetz," exclaimed the violinist to an overzealous doorman. The latter was not impressed. "Sorry, buddy," he said; "I couldn't let you in—not even if you were Rubinoff!"

One Negro housemaid was asked whether she ever listened to the opera broadcasts that were religiously tuned in each week at her employer's home. "'Deed I does!" she replied enthusiastically. "I doan' always understand it, but I sure gets the fragrance of it!"

Toscanini is a devoted radio fan. One evening as he was turning the dial in search of some good music, he caught a phrase from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony being played somewhere. Realizing after a few bars that it was being conducted well, he kept on listening. Toward the end of the finale he exclaimed, "I wonder who is conducting—he reads it admirably!"—only to learn from the announcer at the end that what had been played was the *recording* of that symphony as performed by the New York Philharmonic under—Toscanini.

When Walter Damrosch used to conduct his Friday morning Music Appreciation Hour over NBC, there were few schoolchildren anywhere in this country who were not familiar with the sound of his voice. Once when he was visiting a mid-Western city, the principal of a public school invited him to speak at the morning assembly. Damrosch said he would come—on condition that he be permitted to appear on the stage without a formal introduction. The principal therefore merely announced that "this morning we have with us a distinguished visitor." But the moment that Damrosch uttered his well-known radio greeting,



Papa Damrosch

"Good morning, my dear children," a shout arose throughout the auditorium: "It's Papa Damrosch! It's Papa Damrosch!"

P o t p o u r r i

WALTER DAMROSCH had his own share of unusual experiences. In 1904 he was conducting Wagner's *Parsifal* in Oklahoma. Immediately after the highly spiritual and moving Prelude, the manager of the hall sprang to the stage and announced that "Stewart's Oyster Saloon will be open after the concert."

It seems hard to believe that America's most historic orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, had such humble origins. It was born—officially—on December 7, 1842, and has survived more than a century to become the oldest of the orchestras now functioning. It appeared to have so little chance of survival at its inception that the owner of the Apollo Rooms (in which rehearsals and concerts took place) demanded his rental fee *before* each rehearsal; and the men of the orchestra on entering, chipped in 25c apiece to make up the required sum. At the first concerts, those musicians who did not own dress clothes were allowed to wear frock coat, cravat, and dark trousers; and the best-looking among them were recruited to serve as ushers. During the concert all the men except the 'cellists performed standing; and not one conductor, but *three*, officiated.

Organized on a coöperative basis, the orchestra required each musician during the first season to contribute \$25 to the general fund. Conductors and musicians divided the income from the concerts equally; and the first season yielded \$1,854 at the box-office, which gave each man \$25 profit as his share for the season.

A concert given not many years ago by the band of the Coldstream Guards at Windsor Castle featured a strikingly effective musical num-

ber. Queen Mary was sure it must be one of Elgar's less-known works, while six "Masters of the Assorted Hounds" guessed it to be by some prominent living Italian composer. An equerry was forthwith despatched to find out what the piece was. The Queen meanwhile remarked that if it *was* a work by an Englishman it was good enough to earn a permanent place in the repertory of the Royal Band Concerts. Then the equerry returned with the answer: the number was—*I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate*.

A famous pianist had just finished his recital in a Midwestern town. Tea was being served by the local ladies, and he was meeting the audience informally. One woman bustled up to him for advice. "Oh, I *did* enjoy that last encore you played," she said, "and I must know what it was because I want to buy the music and have my little daughter learn it." "Madam," he replied, "that music was a piano work by Schumann, Opus 23, Number 4." "Oh, how wonderful!" she gushed. "I just love Opuses!"

Recently, the Robin Hood Dell Symphony Orchestra announced a "Philadelphia Find" contest for the purpose of uncovering local talent. One of the 663 applications received read as follows:

"My son Bernard is studying violin five-six years, and his teacher is telling everybody he is better already than Rachmaninoff. He would be very interested in playing with your orchestra at the Robin Hood Dell. Please let us know what date you have in mind for this. I'm living by Philadelphia now four years, and for this maybe I am able to enter your contest too. But I'm not understand English too good. What you mean by 'instrumentalists and vocalics'? Includes this me? I am a tenor."

Others of the six-hundred-odd applicants were a hurdy-gurdy player, a virtuoso on spoons whose repertory included music by Schubert and Bach, a male coloratura soprano who had won first prize in a hog-calling contest, and a drum-majorette who boasted "two pink dimpled knees."

The Devil—and Music

THE earliest outstanding violinist of the past to be credited with being a virtuoso is Arcangelo Corelli of the late 17th century, and—like certain other celebrated violinists—in the popular mind he was commonly associated with the Devil. Though his given name means “archangel,” his admirers were given to calling him “archdevil” because of his fabulous exploits on his instrument. They said that when he played he was having communion with the devil; they noted his physical transformation as he performed: the “distorted face,” the eyes “red as fire,” the eyeballs “rolling in agony”; they marveled at his “super-human” powers—and they were convinced that his genius originated with the Devil, with whom he was suspected of maintaining intimate associations.

Avarice and parsimony often go together, and Corelli was notorious for both qualities. Saving money was something of a disease with him. Though comparatively wealthy, he skimmed on food, clothing, and living quarters. Handel once remarked: “Corelli has a veritable passion for visiting art galleries—on those days when there is no admission charge.”

Whether Tartini, Corelli’s immediate successor, was also identified with the Devil is not known. But Tartini carried on the diabolic tradition of the violin virtuoso by composing a sonata he entitled *The Devil’s Trill*, still popular in the repertory.

He explained the origin of his unusual title as follows:

“One night, in 1713, I dreamed that I had made a compact with the Devil, who promised to be at my service on all occasions. Everything succeeded. . . . Then I decided to offer my violin to the Devil so as to discover what kind of musician he was—when to my great astonishment I heard him play a solo so singularly beautiful, per-



formed with such superior taste and precision, that it surpassed any music I had ever heard or conceived in the whole course of my life. I was so overcome with surprise and delight that I lost my power of breathing, and the violence of the sensation awoke me. Instantly, I seized my violin in the hope of recalling some part of what I had heard—but in vain! However, the work which the dream suggested, and which I wrote down at the time, is doubtless the best of my compositions. I call it the *Devil's Trill Sonata*."

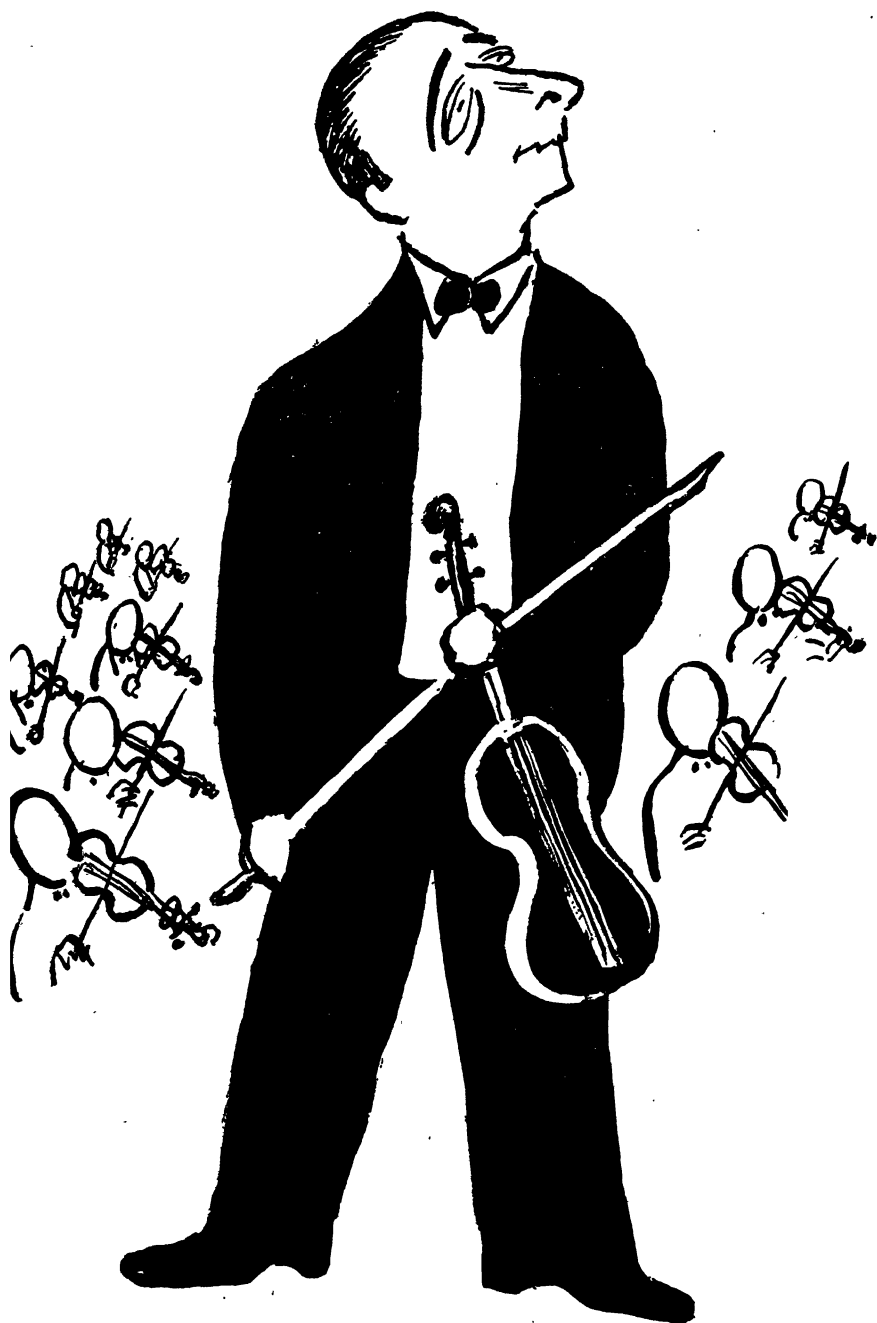
Of all the violinists in history, none was more often associated with the Devil than the electrifying Paganini, toast of all Europe in his own day, and ever since then of legendary fame. To an incredible technique, which he exhibited with no little display of fireworks, he added a cadaverous appearance which inspired superstitious awe in his audiences. In 1831, Castil-Blaze described him as follows: "Five feet five inches in height, built on long, sinuous lines, a long pale face with strong lineaments, a protruding nose, an eagle eye, curly hair flowing to his shoulders and hiding an extremely thin neck. The two deep lines that marked his cheeks might have been, as it were, engraved there by his profession, for they resembled the *ff* of the violin."

Paganini's face was pale and drawn; his thin lips were characteristically curved into a sardonic smile; his eyes had piercing intensity. He looked indeed like a very son of the Devil. Some of his contemporaries crossed themselves if they accidentally touched him. At one time he was forced to publish some of his mother's letters in proof that he had been born of human parents. In Paris he was called Cagliostro; in Prague he was suspected of being the original Wandering Jew; and in Ireland they said he had reached their land on that legendary ship the *Flying Dutchman*.

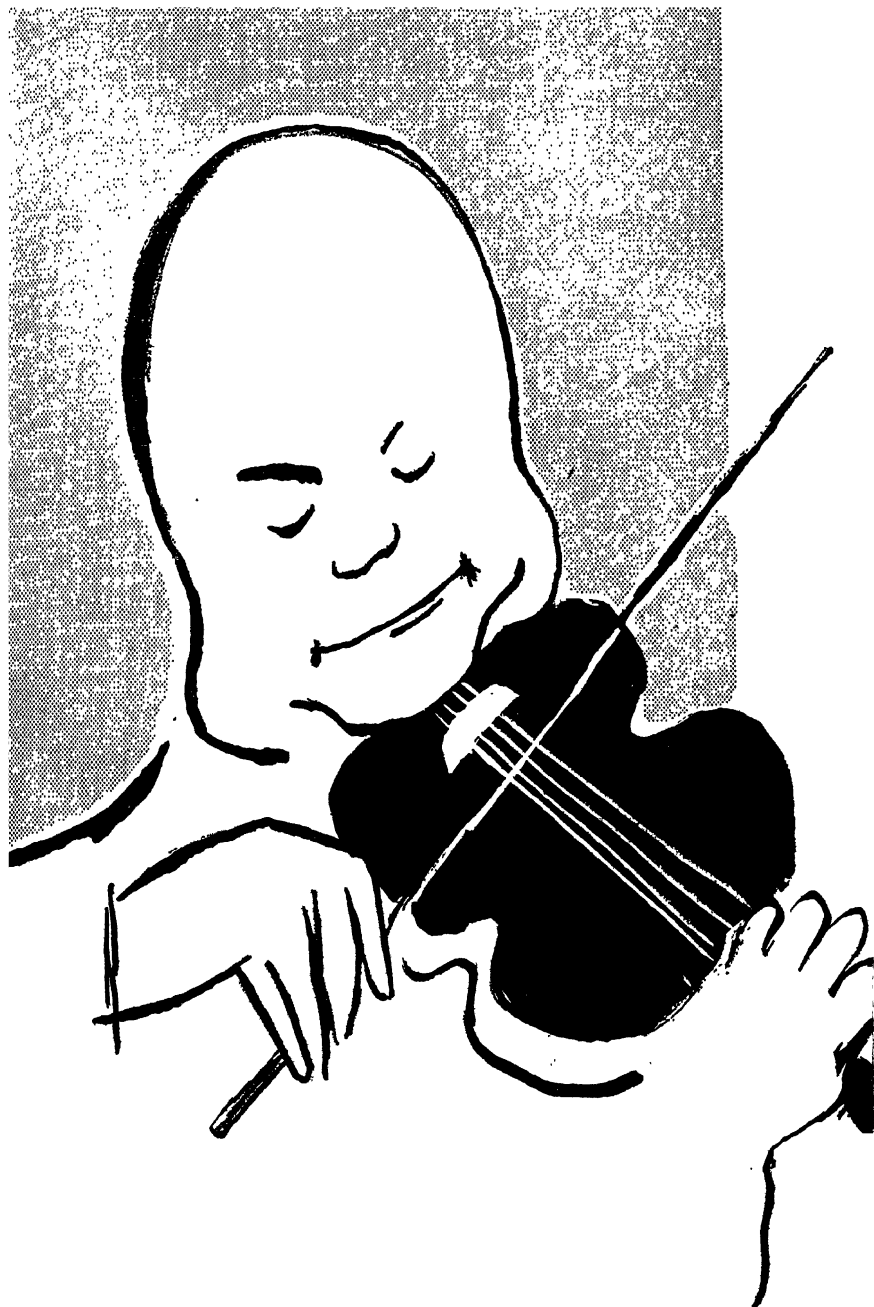
M i s c h a v s . J a s c h a

THE classic anecdote about present-day violinists is of course the pianist Leopold Godowsky's remark at the sensational debut of Jascha Heifetz at Carnegie Hall in 1917. It was a warm evening. Godowsky was sitting in a box with Mischa Elman. Finally Elman, mopping his brow, complained, "Terribly hot, isn't it?" "Not for *pianists!*" was Godowsky's quick rejoinder.

Mischa Elman's son, who is studying the violin, once played be-



Jascha



and Mischa

fore an intimate group of Mischa's friends. "He's wonderful," one lady exclaimed to the proud father. "I'm sure he'll grow up to be another Heifetz!"

Then they tell of the autograph collector who approached Elman asking for three autographs. "But why three?" Elman asked, with no little pride. "Because," was the answer, "I can trade three of *your* autographs for one of Heifetz'."

When Elman was a child prodigy, he once played Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata* for some relatives. During one of the long pauses that mark the work, an aunt of his asked him solicitously, "Why don't you play something you *know*, Mischa?"

Elman and the pianist Levitzki were sitting in the front row at a *Ziegfeld Folies* show. During one of those spectacular scenes in which Ziegfeld's beauties disrobed, Elman suddenly leaned toward Levitzki and asked in a whisper: "Tell me, Levitzki—what did *you* gross on your last tour?"

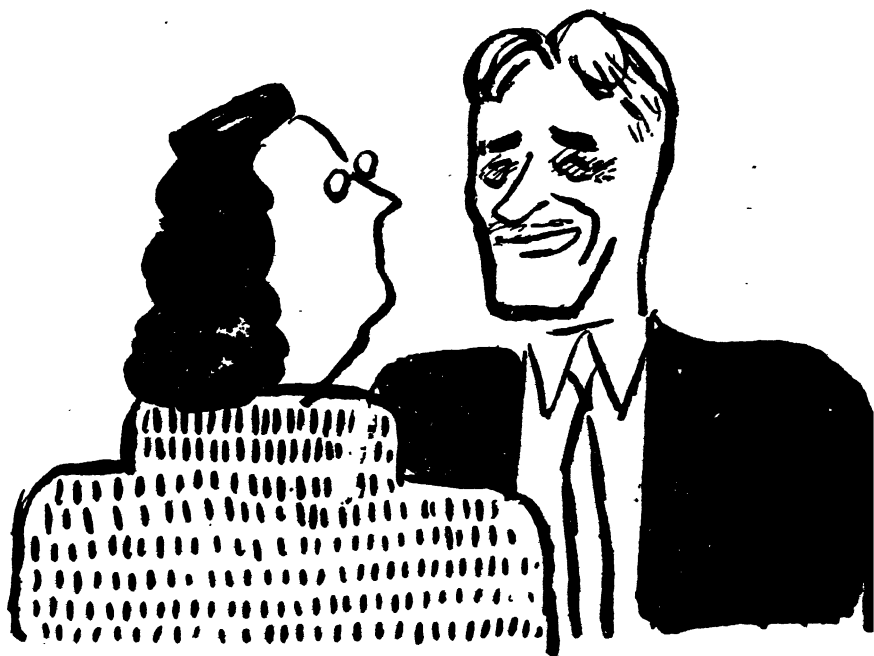
Just before Elman returned to the stage to play the final encore after one of his successful concerts, his father said to him: "Play this one quick, Mischa—the bank is closing soon."

In a reminiscent mood, Heifetz once recalled that he had been earning his living with the violin from the time he was six years old. "What were you before then?" inquired Harpo Marx. "A bum?"

During one of his concerts in London, Heifetz noticed that the King and Queen of England were in a box. Moreover, the Queen smiled at him. He smiled back—and then proceeded to give one of his brilliant performances. The next morning, a messenger from Buckingham Palace arrived to inform him that the King wished to see him. Alarmed, Heifetz protested: "But, believe me, *she* smiled at *me* first!"

They would have you believe that once, when Heifetz and Elman were dining together, a waiter brought them a letter on a tray. The envelope was addressed to *The Greatest Violinist in the World*. "For you," Heifetz suggested gallantly. "Oh, no—it must be for *you*," Mischa insisted. Finally, to settle the question they opened the letter. It began: "Dear Mr. Kreisler . . ."

L ' A m i c o F r i t z



FRITZ KREISLER was asked by a Chicago society lady to play at one of her parties. On his telling her that the fee would be three thousand dollars, she said: "That is quite satisfactory. There's only one stipula-

tion—you are not to mingle with the guests.” “In that case,” said Kreisler, “my fee will be only *two* thousand dollars.”

In Amsterdam, Kreisler once chanced to go into a pawnshop, which among its other wares displayed some cheap violins. This gave him a notion, and he playfully took his own valuable instrument out of its case, showed it to the pawnbroker, and asked whether he would like to buy it. The man took it in his hands and examined it carefully. Then he laid it down hurriedly and left the shop for a moment—to return with a policeman. “Arrest this person!” he cried to the officer. “He has just shown me one of Fritz Kreisler’s violins—stolen, of course!”

Whereupon Kreisler hastened to assure them that he himself was Kreisler—though he had no proof of identity, having left his passport at his hotel. So finally he seized the violin from the officer and started playing some of his own pieces on it. “Why, he’s right!” exclaimed the pawnbroker in astonishment. “He *is* Fritz Kreisler. Nobody else could play *that* way!”

Strolling along the street of a New England town, Kreisler passed a fish shop, where a row of codfish was on display—their mouths open, their eyes staring. “That reminds me—” he said suddenly. “I have a concert to give tonight!”

Many years ago, Fritz Kreisler adopted an unusual—if not unique—method of selling his own music to the public. It was early in his career, when he was suspecting that his own violin compositions had little chance of being performed widely. He therefore decided to publish these pieces as the works of old masters—Vivaldi, Francœur, Martini, Pugnani, and others—explaining that he had come across the original manuscripts in European monasteries and had adapted the works for the violin. His deception worked far better than he had dared to expect, and for a number of years violinists throughout the world played these morsels, identifying them on their programs as the work of old masters.

Then came a time when the New York music critic Olin Downes was trying to find out something about Pugnani's *Praeludium and Allegro*, "arranged for the violin" by Fritz Kreisler. Finally asking Kreisler himself, Downes was amazed to learn that the piece was really Kreisler's original work, and that all the other so-called "transcriptions" were also Kreisler originals. Only at this point did certain musicians recall that more than twenty years earlier, Kreisler had played *Liebesfreud*, *Liebeslied*, and *Schön Rosmarin* as "transcriptions" of pieces by Joseph Lanner. This was in Vienna, and the program also included Kreisler's *Caprice Viennois*, billed as Kreisler's own composition. A Viennese critic then assailed Kreisler for his impudence in featuring such "gems" as the Lanner pieces together with such nonsense as *Caprice Viennois*—and it was in answer to this critic that Kreisler boldly confessed that he had written the "Lanner pieces" as well.

"A Good Pole Playing Solo"

EARLY in his career Paderewski played for Queen Victoria, who exclaimed that he was a genius. "Ah, Your Majesty," replied Paderewski, "a genius—perhaps. But before I was a genius, I was just a drudge."

Performing in a fashionable salon in Paris, Paderewski felt a cold draft on his back from an open window near by. "Kind lady," he begged the hostess, "please close the window. Surely you can't expect to enjoy two pleasures at the same time—listening to an artist, and killing him."

A none-too-well-informed society woman came up to Paderewski after one of his private performances to inquire what it was that he had just played. On being told that it was a Beethoven piano sonata,

she asked: "Oh—is *he* still composing?" Paderewski replied: "No, madam—at the moment, he is *decomposing*."

To a famous polo player, Paderewski remarked: "The difference between us is that you are a good soul playing polo, while I'm a good Pole playing solo."

During the Versailles Peace Conference, Clemenceau met Paderewski and said to him: "So you abandoned your musical career to become a politician? What a come-down!"

It is an open question which field dominated Paderewski's life more completely: music or politics. He was early made conscious of the Polish problem, for his immediate family was composed of Polish patriots who dreamed of freeing Poland from subjection to Tsarist Russia. His mother, the daughter of a university professor banished from Poland to Siberia, had been born in exile; his father was active in secret nationalistic movements. In his third year, Ignace saw the Cossacks descend upon his home, ransack the place, and arrest his father. The scene left an indelible impression upon him and became the source of his later fiery nationalistic ardor.

When, as a boy, he played Chopin, Paderewski derived from this music almost as much patriotic satisfaction as musical. "Everything was forbidden us—the language and faith of our fathers, our national dress, our songs, our poets," Paderewski later said. "Chopin alone was not forbidden us. . . . In him we could still find the living breath of all that was prohibited. . . . He gave it all back to us, mingled with the prayers of broken hearts, the revolt of fettered souls, the pain of slavery, lost Freedom's ache, the cursing of tyrants, the exultant songs of victory."

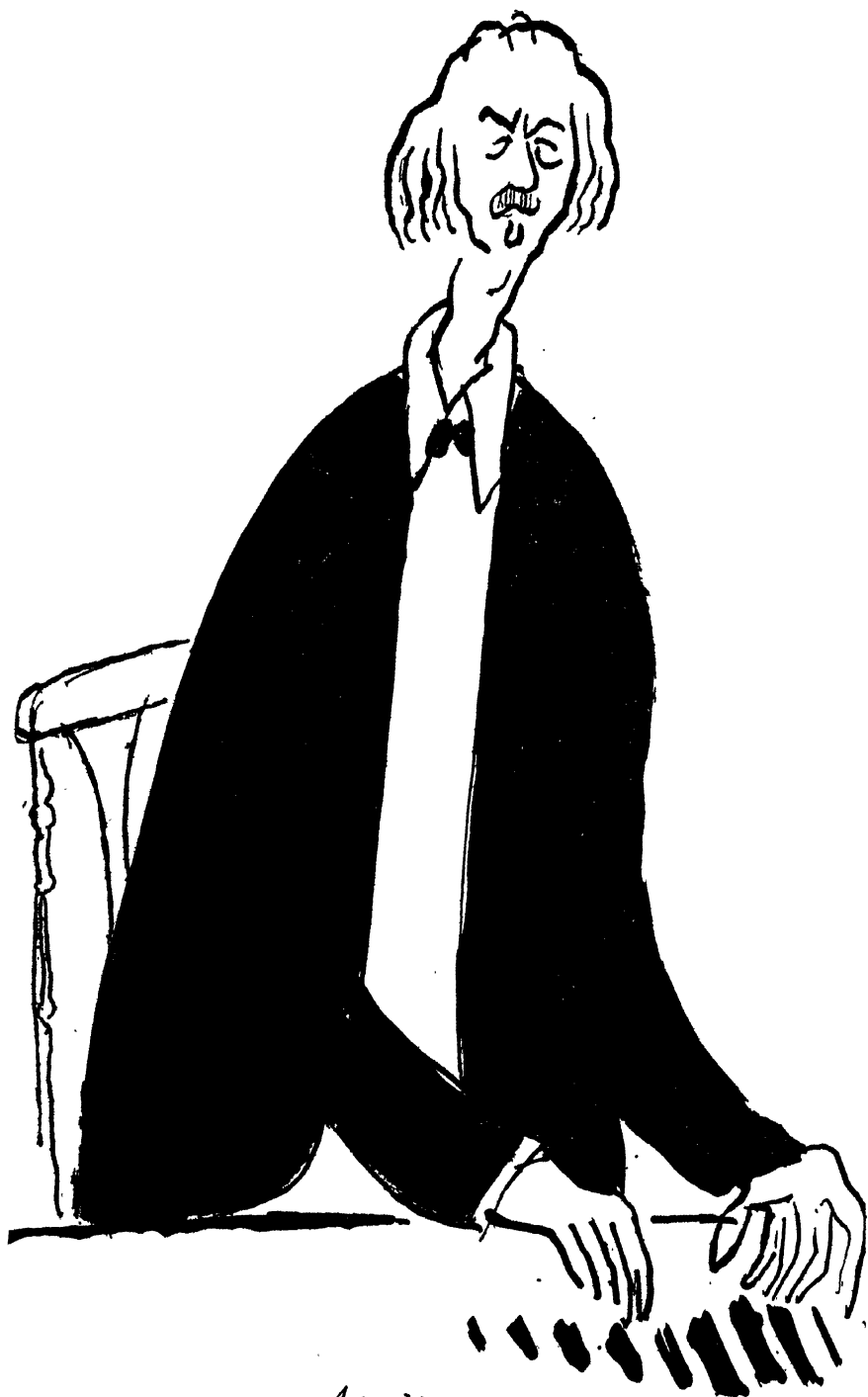
It was in the early 1900s that Paderewski—then already a world-famous virtuoso—turned actively to politics for the first time. He helped to raise funds for the erection of a monument in Warsaw to commemorate the battle of Grünwald. At its unveiling he made a short speech—probably his first excursion into politics. In the same year he

made another speech—this time in honor of Chopin. On both occasions he was given a tremendous reception by his countrymen, which proved to him that his appeal to the public was not entirely as a pianist.

On the evening of July 31, 1914, they were celebrating Paderewski's name-day at his home in Switzerland when news arrived by telephone that Europe was on the brink of war. When the war did break out, Paderewski turned his magnificent energy into helping his country. He gave concerts, the revenue from which was devoted to succoring Polish victims. He personally organized committees in Paris and London to aid the Poles. In 1915 he came to America not only to raise funds for Poland, but to arouse American interest in the Polish problem. For five years, he played and he spoke—and did both eloquently. "I have to speak about a country which is not yours, in a language which is not mine," he told his hearers with touching simplicity. But his message fell on fertile soil, and it was largely through his efforts that freedom for Poland became the thirteenth of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points."

In 1919 Paderewski, heading the national party, was elected premier of a united, independent, autonomous Poland. He was now to see realized a lifelong dream: the emergence of a free Poland, and as its first leader he carried it through its first precarious year of existence. It was in recognition of his political significance that, in 1919, Poland issued a postage stamp bearing his portrait—the first time a stamp had ever been issued for a living musician. Then, in 1920, Paderewski abandoned politics to return to the United States and to his first love—music.

Indisputable though his genius at the piano was, Paderewski's triumphs throughout the world would surely have been less decisive and less impressive if his personality had not been as magnetizing as his pianism. At the instrument he was an unforgettably picturesque figure. His large head appeared poetic, as though throbbing with music; a head which, as Helena Modjeska wrote, "looked like one of Botticelli's or Fra Angelico's angels," with its "aureole of profuse golden hair and almost feminine features." It bespoke spirituality and other-world



A good Pole

lines—the qualities so magically caught by Burne-Jones in his famous portrait of the pianist.

On the stage, the cloak of glamour that enveloped him seemed to set him apart from the everyday world. Yet, as his friends knew, off the platform he was human, sympathetic, and very much of this world. He was not beyond human frailties: He derived great pleasure from playing cards, frequently indulging in all-night bridge sessions. He enjoyed a movie show almost more than any other form of relaxation. He played billiards often, and was quite expert at it. Though he smoked prodigiously, he was no slave to the cigarette; once he gave up smoking for a year merely to convince himself that he was completely the master of his habits—then, when he was convinced, he returned to smoking.

He had an almost hypochondriac absorption in his health. He was always passionately devoted to gymnastics, and watched his diet and physique as carefully as a pugilist might. This, however, was not wasted effort. Up to the end of his life he was well built and muscular. His strong body withstood well the strain and stress of an active musical and political career.

During his last tours of America, Paderewski traveled by private train. This boasted all the comforts of home—including a grand piano, Paderewski's favorite books, comfortable chairs, a private lighting and heating system (so that the car could be sidetracked without losing these conveniences), and sometimes even three additional bridge players. Its entourage of eight people included a chef to prepare Paderewski's rigorously watched diet. Its telephone gave him a direct connection with every city at which he was to stop for a concert.

Paderewski had an almost encyclopedic knowledge of American cities. He would rarely go to a new place without trying first to find out everything he could about it. His personal secretary and friend, knowing of this idiosyncrasy, always went in for intensive research before a new tour was undertaken, so that he might have at his fingertips the hundred and one bits of information about every section they visited, for which the pianist would invariably ask.

In Beethoven's birthplace at Bonn, his piano, carefully roped off,

bore a sign reading: "Please do not touch." Tourists found it hard to resist the temptation to touch the keys hallowed by their one-time contact with the master's fingers. One woman, caught in the act by the caretaker, looked up at him sheepishly and said: "I suppose *everybody* who comes here tries to play something on that piano." "Not everybody," the caretaker replied. "Only the other day, Paderewski was here, and he said he was not worthy to touch it."

P i a n i s t W i t

THE late Leopold Godowsky's wit was almost as famous as his formidable gifts as a piano virtuoso.

A non-Aryan violinist was casually telling Godowsky that he (the violinist) did not have a drop of Jewish blood in him. "Just plain anemic," was Godowsky's diagnosis.

After one of his recitals, Godowsky was congratulated by a rival pianist who was notoriously envious of him. "I must have been pretty terrible today," Godowsky said later, "to have *him* come and congratulate me."

Of an aspiring young pianist, Godowsky said: "She is not without a lack of talent, and she manages to play the simplest pieces with the greatest difficulty."

"How much do you think I earned during my last coast-to-coast tour?" one pianist asked him. "About half," answered Godowsky.

Another much-quoted wit is the venerable Moriz Rosenthal. He once met Godowsky at a small railway junction out West in the desert. Rosenthal was coming from the coast; Godowsky, from New York. Each had just changed his train. "What are you doing in this God-forsaken place?" Godowsky asked, surveying the vast emptiness around them. "Going to give a concert here?" "No," Rosenthal answered, "I came to hear *you!*"

Visiting the home of an American composer, he noticed that the piano top was covered with scores by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and Mozart. "Oh," Rosenthal commented, "I thought you did all your composing by *ear*."

A rival pianist was asked by an admirer to write something brief in an autograph album. Rosenthal, overhearing the request, suggested: "Why don't you write down your repertoire?"

E c c e n t r i c G e n i u s

NOT only have pianists been witty; they have been eccentric as well. And the most eccentric of them all was Vladimir de Pachmann.

During the course of his recitals, he would grimace continually and mutter brief comments on the quality of his own playing—loud enough for the front rows to hear him. "This is *beautiful*, de Pachmann," he would exclaim. Or: "Bravo, de Pachmann, bravo!" In a review George Bernard Shaw once wrote of him: "De Pachmann gave his well-known pantomimic performance, with accompaniments by Chopin, a composer whose music I would listen to M. de Pachmann playing forever, if the works were first carefully removed from the pianoforte."

At an all-Chopin recital, de Pachmann reverently hung a pair of socks on his piano—purportedly a pair once worn by that master. During intermission, one of de Pachmann's friends carefully examined the socks. "As I suspected," he said. "They're de Pachmann's own—and he didn't even bother to send them to the laundry."

One of his concerts was not being so well received as the pianist thought it deserved, and he told his manager—vehemently—that he wouldn't finish the program. "But, Vladimir, you *must* finish," the manager protested. "Please go on, for my sake—you know I appreciate

your genius." So de Pachmann relented: he would give the rest of the concert, but exclusively for the manager's benefit and with the stipulation that the manager had to come on the stage, sit near him, and listen to him. Whereupon, after each number de Pachmann, ignoring the audience completely, rose and bowed pointedly to the manager.



After Joseffy had finished one of his recitals, de Pachmann asked him, "Who would you say are the three greatest pianists of all time?" Joseffy, a superb artist in his own right, prepared to blush modestly—only to hear de Pachmann answer himself: "Why—Liszt, Rubinstein, and [firmly] *myself!*"

John Selby tells of the time de Pachmann, annoyed by finding that his piano stool was not high enough, asked for a telephone directory so that he might put it on the stool to add height. He tried it; shook his head sadly; tore out one sheet and laid that on the stool; then—testing again—smiled beatifically and began playing.

De Pachmann never attended recitals by rival pianists. His explanation: "If the artist plays badly I am bored. If he plays well—I'm miserable."

In 1933, when he was eighty-five years old, de Pachmann established residence in Riga to start divorce proceedings against his fourth wife.

A n d ' C e l l i s t s

DURING the early years of his American career, Pablo Casals was not popular with audiences. His manager complained that Casals had no stage personality. "If you'd only smile when you come before an audience, they'd like you more," was his advice. Not many years later, however, Casals was playing to sold-out houses all over America—"And I'm *still* not smiling!" was his grim comment.

Quoted from Elizabeth C. Moore's *An Almanac for Music-Lovers*—authorship unknown:

There once was a 'cellist named Leo
Who played in a Beethoven trio;
But his technique was scanty,
So he played it *Andante*
Instead of *Allegro con brio*.

William Saroyan, the short-story writer and playwright, was once asked why he so consistently dealt with just one theme in all his work. He answered by telling a story about his uncle, a 'cellist. This uncle played only one note—not one tune, but one note—all the time. His wife grew so tired of hearing that one note interminably that she begged him to change to another one, just for variety. But he told her: "You know, all those 'cellists, who bend over their instruments,

their hands running wild all over the fingerboard—do you know what they are doing? They are *looking for the right note*. Well *I found* the right note—and I'm sticking to it."

Before he became a conductor, John Barbirolli played the 'cello. Now, whenever a 'cellist is soloist under him, Barbirolli cannot resist the temptation to borrow the performer's instrument for a few minutes before concert time, and play on it. Once Gaspar Cassado caught him doing this, and exclaimed: "I have to play a difficult concerto, so *he* limbers up *his* fingers!"

Young Man with a Harmonica

WHEN Larry Adler, the world's foremost harmonica virtuoso, tried to join the Musicians' Union, he was refused membership on the ground that the harmonica is not an instrument but a toy!

Actually, Adler has become the Heifetz of the harmonica—playing fugues, concertos, sonatas, and quartets—without being able to read a note of music. When he was soloist with the New York Philharmonic in a performance of a Vivaldi concerto (originally for violin), one of the men in the orchestra remarked: "If he can make music that way without being able to read a note, let's all hurry to unlearn what we know."

When first he began concertizing, Adler tried to induce the manager to let him change his name to "Lawrence" Adler, because he felt that the diminutive Larry was undignified for a serious concert artist. "Maybe so," the manager said; "but names like Jascha and Mischa are diminutives—and those fellows have done fairly well." Adler never again raised the question.

Once he was invited to appear on a radio network in a hillbilly act written and directed by Norman Corwin.

Adler's part was that of a hillbilly, and he had to talk in mountain dialect, as well as play folk tunes on the harmonica. Corwin asked Adler to telephone him and talk like a hillbilly, so as to be sure that he would do for the part. Adler agreed—but what Corwin heard over the telephone made him collapse in his chair: "Deed you-all veesh for me I should tuk this hillbilly stuff, maybe?"

Adler was talking of a USO tour he had made in the Near East. "Imagine," he said, "I actually prayed at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem." "What for?" his wife asked acidly. "Bigger billing?"



Adler with his toy

P o t p o u r r i

EUGEN D'ALBERT was another famous pianist who went in for matrimony on the wholesale plan. One of his pupils asked him, "Professor, will you please invite me to one of your weddings?"

A famous archeologist was describing one of his expeditions to d'Albert. "You know," the scientist said, "our knowledge of the ancient Assyrian is based merely on a few hundred pieces of broken crockery." "It seems," remarked d'Albert, "that marriage is indeed an ancient institution."

One of d'Albert's wives was the famous woman pianist, Teresa Carreño. After a New York concert at which she had played one of d'Albert's piano concertos, James Gibbons Huneker pointed out: "At her *first* concert, Carreño performed the *second* concerto of her *third* husband."

It is a curious paradox that three of the greatest virtuosos of our generation each had a violent antipathy for their respective instruments.

At more than one period in his life, Paderewski felt an uncontrollable detestation for the piano, originally brought about by a neurotic condition which attacked his hands and made the playing of the piano a highly painful ordeal. More than once he continued to play only through the herculean strength of his will. Time and again he confessed to wishing he might give up the piano permanently, and always he regarded his concert career as a bondage from which he could not escape.

Pablo Casals, that incomparable genius of the 'cello, also detests his instrument. Some two decades ago he seriously considered giving up his own virtuoso career in order to become piano accompanist to his wife—a mediocre singer! Once, when Casals was mountain-climbing, one of his fingers was caught and slightly crushed by a rolling boulder. His first thought was, "Thank God, I won't have to play the 'cello any longer!"

Fritz Kreisler's career has been marked by a number of attempts to run away from the violin and a professional musical career. Though from early boyhood he proved his exceptional talent, he renounced the violin on three different occasions: first to study art in Paris, then to study medicine, then to become an Austrian army officer. He has always had a marked aversion to practising; in recent years he has done almost none. But he once warned an interviewer mischievously: "Don't ever print the fact that I never practise. It would be bad for violin students!"

A young woman who aspired to a career as concert pianist once "auditioned" before Anton Rubinstein. When she had finished playing, she asked him, "Now what would you advise me to do?" "Get married," Rubinstein answered tersely.

Besides being a celebrated conductor, Hans von Bülow was also a remarkable pianist. He was once asked his opinion of a Berlin pianist who, at a recent recital, had had a lapse of memory and had been reduced to improvising. What had Bülow thought of that improvised passage? "Well—it wasn't as bad as what he *could* remember."

An elderly concert pianist (variously identified) was introduced to a beautiful girl wearing a low-cut, strapless evening gown. "I wonder," he said whimsically, "what keeps your gown up." "Only your age, sir," answered the young woman.

Percy Grainger did not like the formal way in which concert pianists made their appearance on the stage. At one of his own recitals he arrived by way of the lobby, walked down the aisle, at a leisurely pace, shook hands with a friend in the audience, talked to another for a moment, threw a nod of recognition to a third. Then, nonchalantly, he sprang to the stage, walked to the piano, and unceremoniously began his concert.



When, as a child prodigy, Josef Hofmann used to concertize in Europe, his father always gave him a twenty-five-cent piece for each concert. As the boy grew increasingly popular, more and more encores were called for, and little Josef's mathematical mind set to work. At last he went to his father to propose a revised schedule: Instead of twenty-five cents a *concert*, he wanted to be paid for *each piece* he performed—two cents for any composition of his own (a reduced

rate, since he enjoyed playing these), and five cents each for all other works.

Besides being one of the foremost living pianists, Hofmann is also a successful inventor. He began his scientific career as a boy when his mother forbade him to go skating: He devised a set of collapsible skates which he could hide in his pocket until he was out of sight. Since then, Hofmann has devoted many of his leisure hours to concocting ingenious inventions. He designed a model house whose foundation could rotate with the sun—long before architects proved this to be practicable. When steam automobiles first came into use he built one for himself, and it not only ran but served him well for several years. He has also invented automobile springs, shock-absorbers, snubbers. Annoyed by the warped floors of the concert stage in many auditoriums—because the unevenness made the piano bench wobble—Hofmann solved the problem by devising a bench whose legs were so constructed that each could be adjusted individually to conform to the irregularities of the floor boards.

The pianist Vladimir Horowitz has made a fetish of a photograph of Liszt. To this day, before giving an important concert he looks reverently upon it for a few minutes, as if asking the great Franz to watch over him.

In spite of his wide fame and notable career he is perhaps the most nervous of musicians before a concert. Recently, when he was to perform a concerto with a symphony orchestra, he insisted, at the last moment, that he couldn't go out and play. The manager urged that the least he could do was to go out on the stage and explain to the audience that he would not be able to play that evening. Well, this seemed reasonable, so Horowitz went out—saw the piano in front of him—took a dive toward it before he could change his mind, and—once having struck a chord—found himself at ease, and proceeded to play magnificently.

The two-piano team of Luboshutz and Nemenoff were scheduled to give a concert in a small New England town. A few hours before

the performance, they were approached for an interview. Hardly had they finished this chore when another such request came—then a third—and a fourth. At last Luboshutz asked one of the young men curiously, "Are there, then, so many different papers in this town?" "Oh, no," he answered. "You see—we're not really newspapermen at all. Just students in the journalism class, practising interviewing!"

Capsule criticisms:

A New York writer on music characterized Bartlett and Robertson—that magnificent two-piano team—as "the Bartlett pair."

Of a somewhat older two-piano combination, Philip Hale of Boston once wrote: "We have heard these two gentlemen separately without being greatly stirred; but their combination was like bringing together the component parts of a Seidlitz powder."

Success as a virtuoso is frequently the result of sheer "guts" as well as talent. When the Austrian pianist Paul Wittgenstein lost his right arm during the First World War, it seemed to his admirers that his musical career was finally ended. But not to Wittgenstein. After leaving the hospital, he painstakingly set to work developing the technique of his left hand. Then he started building a concert repertory by transcribing for left hand alone a number of piano masterpieces. At the end of trying months, he returned to the stage—the only one-armed concert pianist in the world. Now a recognized artist, he has appeared throughout the world, Ravel and other composers having written works expressly for his use.

Rudolph Kolisch had spent years preparing to become a concert violinist when the middle finger of his left hand was crushed and the fingertip had to be amputated. Although his teachers advised him to turn to other endeavors, Kolisch refused to admit defeat and decided to become a left-hand violinist: that is, he reversed the usual procedure by using his left hand for the bow and the right hand for the fingering. After a long period of renewed study, he became a great string-quartet player, founder and leader of the Kolisch Quartet.

3

The Conductors

H o w I t A l l B e g a n

IN THE early days, conductors used any means available to them for beating time. "One man conducts with the foot," we read in a document published in 1719, "another with a head, a third with a hand, some with both hands, and some again take a roll of paper." Some used a handkerchief attached to the end of a stick; some hammered a key on a bench. In the 16th century at the Sistine Chapel, time was beaten with a roll of paper called the "sol-fa." Lully, in the 17th century, used a heavy stick, probably his cane, to pound out the beat on the floor. It is Lully, by the way, who is considered the profession's only known fatal casualty; so often did he strike this cane accidentally against his foot that at last he developed a fatal gangrene of the leg.

At the Opéra in Paris, it was customary for the conductor to strike a stick on one of the desks with metronomic regularity; the contemporary epithet for such a conductor was "wood-chopper." In the 18th century, it was the fashion to combine conducting with the playing of the organ or the harpsichord, which sounded the ground bass; less frequently, with the violin, or the flute. Sometimes the conductor at the harpsichord would signal the beat with his head to the concertmaster facing him; the concertmaster, in turn, would convey the tempo to the others by movements of his violin (if he was playing) or (if at rest) by those of his bow.

Not until the 19th century did the baton come into popular use. In 1820, Louis Spohr directed a few guest performances of the Royal Philharmonic in London, bewildering the men of the orchestra at the first rehearsal by drawing from his pocket a small stick, and trying to direct by waving it in front of them. "Quite alarmed at such a novel proceeding," wrote Spohr in his autobiography, "some of the directors protested against it, but when I besought them to grant me at least

one trial they became pacified. . . . After the first part of the symphony, [the orchestra] expressed aloud its united assent to the new mode of conducting and thereby overruled all further opposition on the part of the directors. . . . The triumph of the baton as a time-giver was complete."

The Early Prima Donnas

IN HIS time they called him "the insane musician"; but Toscanini, Stokowski, and Koussevitzky stem directly from him. He was the first of the showmen conductors. His name was Louis Antoine Jullien, of French birth (1812) but of English nationality.

He had a flair for the spectacular which impelled him, at the dawn of his career, to increase his orchestra to gargantuan size, and to feature at one of his concerts two symphonies in succession, a rather novel procedure for the time.

He assumed a most distinctive dress. A brightly colored velvet coat was thrown open to reveal an elaborately embroidered shirt-front. He rarely wore a cravat, preferring to have the graceful lines of his neck rise Shelley-like from the open collar. Jewels sparkled from his fingers.

To bring glamour to the platform, he stood on a crimson dais, decorated in gold. The music-stand in front of him was hand-carved and gilded. Behind him stood an ornate velvet chair resembling a throne.

His eccentricities soon made him one of the most talked-of musicians in Europe. When he played a quadrille, he would seize a violin and bow from the concertmaster's hands (or pull a piccolo from a pocket of his coat) and, with elaborate gestures, play together with the orchestra. When he finished, he would sink exhausted onto his throne.

When he conducted Beethoven he would don a pair of fresh white kid gloves, which were brought to him on a tray. After pulling



*He
had
a
flair
for
the
spectacular*

these on with ceremonious elegance, he would begin to conduct. For other important works, he used a special jeweled baton, which would also be brought to him with great pomp and circumstance.

He died in an insane asylum in 1860.

Another of the early prima donnas was Hans von Bülow. Whenever he had conducted a particularly effective passage, he would turn around to observe the audience's pleasure. He was addicted to making speeches before concert-time, and more often than not the speeches were obscure and meaningless. Once in Hamburg, soon after the death of Wilhelm I, he conducted a Beethoven symphony on a program that also included a Brahms concerto, with the composer as soloist. Before the concert, von Bülow—with sublime irrelevance—dilated on the genius of Felix Mendelssohn. Then, just as mysteriously, he heaped praises on the late Kaiser Wilhelm. Finally he spoke words in praise of Brahms. "Mendelssohn is dead," he said. "The Emperor is dead. But Bismarck lives, and Brahms lives." Then wheeling around, he played—Beethoven's Eighth Symphony.

He was once rehearsing his orchestra with a singer who was consistently out of pitch. He turned to her. "Will you please give the orchestra *your* 'A'?" he begged.

One Parisian custom always infuriated Hans von Bülow: the refusal of the French musician to take orchestral rehearsals seriously, and his tendency to send a substitute whenever he was not in the mood to attend. Once when von Bülow was directing one of Paris's best-known orchestras, he directed his attention approvingly on one musician—the drummer—who had so far never missed a rehearsal. Such diligence, he felt, deserved praise, and he personally went over to the man and thanked him for his faithful attendance. "That's quite all right," the drummer told him; "you see, I won't be able to come to the performance."

One of Bülow's favorite aphorisms was: "A score should be in the conductor's head—not the conductor's head in the score."

Then there was the fussy Artur Nikisch, who made such a point of looking well on the platform—with his tight-fitting clothing, his lace cuffs, and his beautiful gestures.

At one of his concerts, Nikisch stopped a Bruckner symphony in the middle to turn around sharply and give a woman in the front row a cruel verbal lashing for talking during the performance.

He used to be stopped on the street by innumerable admirers. His hand would be kissed by swooning ladies. They tore pieces of his garments from his body in order to secure precious mementos of their musical hero. They used to beg for locks of his hair. To this last request he was always amenable, mailing to each admiring applicant a few strands of his hair. "At this rate," a friend warned him, "you will grow bald in no time." "Not I," Nikisch answered with a wink; "my dog!"

The Incomparable Maestro

TOSCANINI is, of course, the conductor who has inspired more anecdotes than any other musician of our time. His incredible ear and memory, his colorful temperament, his integrity and idealism, his genius, provide the threads from which innumerable stories are spun.

At rehearsals he is as simple as a child, and as profound as a scholar. He cries, laughs, burlesques, yielding to every emotion as it strikes him. "*Pianissimo*, please," he beseeches, falling on his knees and clasping his hands as if in prayer. "Like *this* the music should sound," and he drops a handkerchief in the air to demonstrate how limp and effortless the melody should emerge from the violins.

When things go poorly, his temper is cyclonic. He smashes batons. Once his baton was so pliable that it refused to break. Toscanini tossed it aside, drew out his handkerchief, and tried to tear that. But the handkerchief, too, proved stubborn. So Toscanini took off his alpaca jacket, and not until he had torn it to shreds was he appeased.

He hurls invectives. At one time he descended on a culpable musician with furious Italian profanity. Suddenly he realized that the musician did not understand Italian. After groping vainly for adequate insults in English, he spluttered desperately, "You *bad, bad* man!"

On another occasion, after he had been particularly violent to one of his men, he started to apologize for his outburst. But, even as he voiced his regrets, he couldn't help remembering how the musician had played, and—forgetting his good intentions—once again burst into fury. Finally he said softly: "You see, God tells me how the music should sound, and *you* come in the way."

When an actual performance goes poorly, he storms off the stage, goes into his dressing-room, and smashes anything in sight. In New York, he fled out of the concert auditorium after one of his performances, through the thick of traffic, oblivious of everyone and everything—except his terrible pain. A few of the orchestra men caught up with him and gently led him into a taxicab and brought him back.

When things go well, his face beams, his eyes blaze, and he is the happiest man in the world. He may even attempt a jest. "Far away," he told an oboist, describing a pianissimo, "far away—in Brooklyn."

Rehearsing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the musicians responded with particular sensitivity to his every wish and desire. What resulted was a performance that moved the men of the orchestra to a spontaneous ovation. They rose to their feet and cheered the little man who had just given them such a new and wonderful insight into the music. Desperately, Toscanini tried to stop them, waving his arms wildly, shouting to them. Finally, when the ovation subsided, he said in a broken voice: "It isn't me, men—it's *Beethoven!*"

At rehearsals he always reveals his fabulous scholarship. There is not a note in the score that is not known to him, not a nuance or an effect that he loses sight of—even though he conducts from memory. A bassoonist went to him one day to complain that his instrument



Toscanini

was broken and that he couldn't sound the note of E-flat. For a moment Toscanini reflected—and then said: "That's all right—there *is* no E-flat in any of your parts today."

A violinist consulted him on how to play a passage in one of Beethoven's "last quartets." Not for forty years had Toscanini seen or heard any of this incomparable music; but after a few moments of silent thought he was able to recall every note of the score, and to give the violinist the guidance sought.

He seems to possess a sixth sense that tells him how a musical work should sound. Many years ago, he inserted a retard in one of Verdi's works—a retard not marked in the score. Verdi came to him excited, wondering how Toscanini could have guessed that a retard would be effective at that point. The composer himself confessed: "I wanted it there, but I was afraid to put it in for fear conductors would exaggerate it. But *you* played the passage exactly the way I had heard it inside of me!"

An American composer brought Toscanini the manuscript of a new orchestral work. Toscanini glanced at it, then quickly suggested certain changes in the orchestration at a certain point. "And do you know," the composer said to a friend later, "that passage had been worrying me for some time, but I just didn't know how to fix it—not until Toscanini put his finger squarely on the place and told me how."

Though he is a shrewd businessman, capable of getting the highest possible price for his services, he is also the most generous musician alive. As long as he conducted at the Bayreuth Festivals, he refused to accept any payment, even though he worked harder there than he did in other well-paying posts. "It would have been like taking money from Wagner himself!" he explained.

Years before that, in Italy, he was asked to conduct in a Verdi festival, and promised to do so on condition that he shouldn't be paid. An envious rival conductor was also asked to take one of the

performances. "I will," he agreed, "if you will pay me just one lira more than Toscanini gets." His condition was accepted, and after his performance the conductor received a check—for one lira!

Frequently, while conducting, Toscanini accompanies the music with his raucous, high-pitched singing—often without being conscious that he is doing it. Once he stopped a rehearsal abruptly to demand, "*Who* is making that noise?"

To a temperamental prima donna, who insisted that she was the star of the show, he shouted defiantly: "Madam, stars are found only in heaven."

"I kissed my first woman and smoked my first cigarette on the same day," he confesses. "I have never had time for tobacco since."

Apollo of the Baton

ATTRACTIVE, dynamic, provocative Leopold Stokowski is one of the most glamorous figures ever to stand on the American concert platform. Conscious of his effect on audiences, he has always been extremely careful about his dress, his bodily gestures, and especially the graceful motions of his hands. On several occasions he has directed the lights of the hall on his hands in such a way that the motion threw effective shadows on the walls and ceilings; and in Hollywood, he insisted that the camera hover affectionately over them, tracing their supple movements. Oscar Levant wrote:* "I would like to be present, if I could have my choice of all the moments in musical history, when Stokowski suddenly became conscious of his beautiful hands. *That* must have been a moment!"

* From "A Smattering of Ignorance" by Oscar Levant, copyrighted 1939, 1940 by Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc.



Stokowski

He has always searched for different ways to heighten his appeal to audiences. One season, at the last rehearsal, he went into a very minute and careful study of *The Blue Danube* by Johann Strauss. This puzzled the musicians of the orchestra considerably, for the waltz was not scheduled on the program, and the season was at an end. A few weeks later, the summer season of the Philadelphia Orchestra began. At the opening concert Stokowski was in the audience. The manager noticed him there and announced his presence to the audience, which immediately gave him a tremendous ovation. Grateful, Stokowski consented to conduct his orchestra in one number—spontaneous-like. The number proved to be *The Blue Danube*, and of course the audience was deeply impressed by Stokowski's "unrehearsed" performance.

He has done the unexpected as naturally as others do the prosaic. At one rehearsal, he had incense burning on the stage. At another, he delivered a lecture on metaphysics. At a third, he worked astride a wooden hobbyhorse.

Wishing to rebuke an audience for its persistent habit of coming in late, he once played a number—it was Lekeu's *Fantaisie*—and had several of his musicians straggle onto the stage one by one while the work was being played, and take their places noisily. Another day, when he was to conduct Saint-Saëns's *Carnival of the Animals* he had animals parading on the stage, including a full-grown elephant.

Always an innovator, he was one of the first conductors in America to dispense with a score and to conduct without a baton. Many years ago, when first he conducted without a score, a kind old lady exclaimed: "Isn't it a shame that Stokowski cannot read music? Imagine how wonderful he would be, if he just knew how!"

When he went off on his idyllic tour of pre-war Italy with Greta Garbo, he inquired of a newspaperman how he could leave the country without being recognized. "Why don't you go blackface?" was the helpful suggestion.

A man of mercurial temper, Stokowski often turns suddenly cold to a close friend, and just as often treats a stranger with warm cordiality. In some moods he has refused for a long time even to speak to some person with whom, up to then, he has been on intimate terms. This happened once with Gusikoff, concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra. For several weeks Stokowski pointedly refused to address even one word to him, until Gusikoff felt that somehow, somewhere, he must have failed Stokowski and angered him. Finally he decided to tackle Stokowski. "Why don't you say something to me?" he pleaded. "When I do say something to you," the conductor answered, "*then* it will be time to worry."

A b o u t ' ' K o u s s y ' '

KOUSSEVITZKY speaks with a marked Russian accent, often expressing himself abruptly, and as often trying to answer questions he has not completely understood. After one of his men had made the same mistake over and over again, Koussevitzky lost patience and summarily dismissed him. As the musician made his way off the stage he called to the conductor: "Nuts to you!" Huffily Koussevitzky replied: "Id's doo lade to apologize!"

Interrupted during rehearsals by the whispering of his men, he shouted: "Don't spik! I say, don't spik! If you spik, I go home!"

Koussevitzky acquired his first orchestra as a wedding gift. On marrying the wealthy Nathalie, Koussevitzky was asked by his father-in-law what he would like for a present. Unhesitatingly the young man answered that he wanted—a symphony orchestra. His father-in-law came through handsomely, providing young Koussevitzky with the wherewithal to start an orchestra made up of the best musicians then available in Moscow.

Oscar Levant wrote:* "Koussevitzky is unparalleled in the performance of Russian music, whether it is by Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Strauss, Wagner, or Aaron Copland."

T h e D e a n H i m s e l f

OFTEN referred to as "the dean of American conductors," Walter Damrosch has been far more influential in the development of American music than significant as an interpreter. A famous guest conductor at Walter Damrosch's now-defunct New York Symphony Society inspired one critic to remark how wonderful the orchestra *could* sound under a *good* conductor. Dr. Damrosch did not miss the implication. The week after that, during the final movement of a symphony, he put down his baton, took a chair, and listened to the orchestra finish the movement—without the benefit of his direction. "You see," was his explanation, "I wanted to prove that my orchestra is *so* good that it can play well even without a conductor!"

Not the least of his charming traits is an engaging sense of humor. Once, directing a benefit concert for the composer Moritz Moszkowski, in which sixteen pianists participated, he whispered mischievously to the first row of the audience: "What they need here is a traffic cop, not a conductor."

Before one of his lectures on Wagner, he reminisced wistfully to his audience: "When I look at your young, shining, girlish faces, I recognize many who attended my first Wagner lecture fifty years ago."

A youthful would-be conductor approached Damrosch to ask the secret of successful conducting. Damrosch gave him a baton and asked him to beat three-quarter time. The aspiring conductor did this. "Now beat two-quarter time." Again the young man obeyed. "That,"

* From "A Smattering of Ignorance" by Oscar Levant, copyrighted 1939, 1940 by Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc.

Damrosch said, "is all there is to it. Only—don't give away the secret to anybody when you are famous!"

Damrosch is also a composer. Not long ago he directed the New York Philharmonic in a performance of his opera *Cyrano de Bergerac*. The opera was rather dull, and somewhere along the middle of the second act a few in the audience started to trickle out. Damrosch noticed the exodus out of the corner of his eye. At the end of that act he turned to the audience and said pleadingly: "Please don't go home yet. The best part of the opera is coming."

“He Talka Too Much”

SOMETIMES Otto Klemperer waxes especially eloquent in explaining the inner meaning of a musical work to his orchestra men. Once, just after he had likened a work to a misty night on a mountain with heavy clouds overhead, the concertmaster interrupted with: "Why don't you just tell us whether you want it played *forte* or *piano*?"

When Klemperer was equally expansive on another occasion, the small, rotund oboist of the New York Philharmonic, Bruno Labate, put in a protest. "Mista Klemps," he said, "you talka too much."

When this same Bruno Labate was asked by the other men of the orchestra whether he wasn't rather reckless in speaking that way to a conductor he answered: "I should be afraid—I with \$75,000 in the bank?"

Klemperer was rehearsing a Beethoven piano concerto in Los Angeles with Artur Schnabel. Schnabel disagreed with some of the tempi, and, behind Klemperer's back, proceeded to give the musicians

proper indications as to the time. He was caught in the act by the conductor. "Herr Schnabel," he said frigidly, "the conductor is *here*"—and he pointed to the conductor's platform. "Ah," answered Schnabel, "Klemperer is *there*, and I'm *here*. But where is Beethoven?"

Temperamental Sir Thomas

AN OBOE player—this time *not* Labate—was being told by Sir Thomas Beecham how a certain piece of music should be played. "Any fool can see that," he remarked. "I'll have to take *your* word for it, sir," replied Sir Thomas.

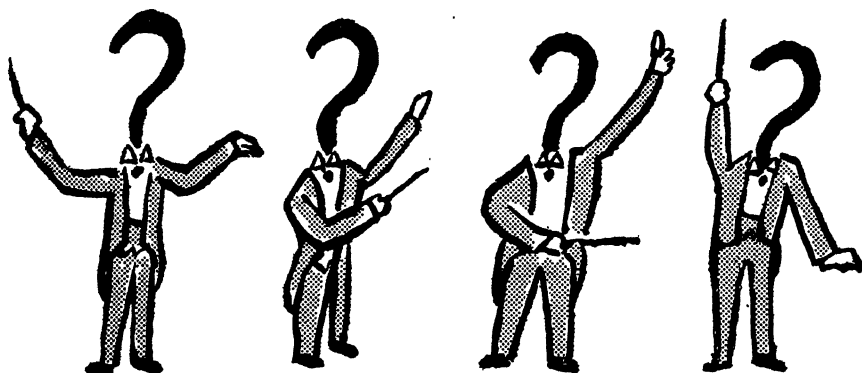
Beecham is the son of the famous manufacturer of Beecham's Pills. When he became conductor of the New York Philharmonic, Lawrence Gilman inquired whether the orchestra shouldn't change its name to *Pillharmonic*.

Beecham also has something of a sense of humor. He was conducting a rather shabby performance of *Aida* in a small English town. On the stage, the horse forgot its decorum and yielded to physical necessity. Nimble quoting David Garrick, Sir Thomas remarked to his musicians: "A critic—upon my word!"

Of his season of Russian operas in London, he said: "It was a great success. Nobody understood a word."

Of British music: "It is in a state of perpetual promise. It might even be said to be a long promissory note."

One morning, Beecham decided to take a brisk walk on Fifth Avenue. Since the air was rather crisp he wore his fur coat. As he walked he grew warmer, until—unable to bear the heat any longer—he hailed a cab and threw his coat into it. "Follow me," he told the cab driver, and continued his stroll with the taxicab following him.



G u e s s i n g G u e s t s

WHEN the vogue for guest conductors was prevalent in this country many of them made a habit of conducting their concerts from memory in order to impress their audiences. Often this practice played such havoc with the music performed that these men were spoken of as "guess" conductors.

When one orchestra player was asked what a visiting guest was conducting that day, he answered: "I don't know what he'll conduct, but *we're* playing Brahms's First."

It was one of these "guess" conductors who so infuriated one of his players that the man shouted at him, "If you bawl me out again, I swear I'll follow your beat."

An American-born conductor was making his debut with one of our great orchestras. He saw to it that wide publicity was given to his "photographic memory." And when rehearsals began, though he was conducting premières of several complex works he contemptuously pushed aside the scores and worked from memory. Again and again

he made comments that were amazing in their display of familiarity with every note and nuance in the score. Evidently, thought the men, here is another Toscanini.

Presently, however, it happened that a bassoonist made a mistake, and it passed unnoticed by the conductor. Curious, the same man then purposely misplayed a few notes; to his astonishment, the conductor said nothing, did nothing, seemed completely unaware of anything wrong. Gradually it dawned on the bassoonist—and on the other men in the orchestra: this conductor had a freak memory that could remember details in the score, but actually he didn't know what the music itself ought to sound like!

From that moment on, they had a field day. One man turned his music upside down and played his part accordingly. Another improvised as he went along. Some injected uncalled-for dissonances. Several revised tempi at will. And through it all, the conductor continued waving his stick, smiling happily on the men, unconscious of the tonal pandemonium that had been set loose. Then, when the work was over, he said, "Thank you, gentlemen, for a splendid performance!"

"He's a wonderful conductor," remarked one musician afterward. "Is it his fault that he's tone-deaf?"

P o t p o u r r i

HERE'S the way Laurence McKinney put it, in *People of Note*:

*This backward Man, This View Obstructor,
Is known to Us as The Conductor.

Toscanini asked his granddaughter, Sonia Horowitz, which she would prefer to be when she grew up—a conductor like her grand-

* From "People of Note" by Laurence McKinney, copyrighted by Laurence McKinney, published by E. P. Dutton & Co., N. Y.

daddy, or a concert pianist like her father. "A conductor," she answered unhesitatingly. "Why?" Toscanini asked her, obviously pleased by her choice. "Because," was her succinct answer, "it's a lot easier."

It was in a European town that the local mayor complained about the conductor of the orchestra. "He hasn't played a note of music since he's taken over the job. If he goes on doing nothing more than making gestures, he'd better find another job for himself."

Karl Muck was a martinet of the baton, treating his musicians with severe discipline and acid humor. Once, when a trombone player made a bad slip, Muck raised his rump toward the offending performer and remarked: "I could play with *this* much better."

He was sometimes cruel in his estimate of other conductors. Of Josef Stransky (who conducted the New York Philharmonic for more than a decade, but who never won the same esteem from musicians as from the public), he commented: "Stransky can do nothing, and the nothing he can do *least* is accompanying."

At a party in New York, famous musicians were entertaining the guests, each playing the instrument with which he was least familiar. Harold Bauer played the double-bass; Georges Barrère, the violin, and so on. And Karl Muck asked whether Alfred Hertz (then conductor at the Metropolitan Opera House) would officiate as conductor.

"Gentlemen," John Barbiroli once explained to his musicians, "*that* passage should sound like the night, and you make it sound like the morning after."

Another British conductor, Malcolm Sargent, once rehearsed the Royal Choral Society in Handel's *Messiah*. Not liking the way the women were singing the chorus "For Unto Us a Child Is Born," he rapped sharply for attention and said: "Just a little more reverence, please—and not quite so much astonishment."

Jan Sibelius is notorious for giving parties in Helsinki that go on for days at a time. Once when Bruno Walter was a guest, he broke away hurriedly to fill a conducting engagement in a near-by town, returning to resume where he had left off in the merrymaking. Just as he was about to pour himself a glass of wine, Sibelius came over and wagged an accusing finger: "Shame, Bruno, so long you were in the bathroom!"

One wealthy man, ambitious to become a conductor, engaged a large symphony orchestra for the purpose of giving a concert at Carnegie Hall. It did not take very long for the musicians to realize that this conductor didn't have much of an idea of conducting—or even, for that matter, of music. In a fit of rage at the ignoramus standing in front of him, the kettledrummer let go a twelve-bar roll in the middle of a quiet passage. The conductor grew red and demanded: "*Who* did that?"

There is a legend to the effect that a certain conductor was condemned to death for his musical sins: he who had murdered so many compositions was himself to be punished, and the sentence was—electrocution. So he was duly strapped into the chair, the signal for the current was given, and justice was about to be done. But, though there was enough current to kill ten men, the victim stayed alive. Again and again the current was turned on, with absolutely no effect. Finally the warden announced gravely: "It is evidently impossible to kill this man by electricity—he is a non-conductor."

4

The Singers

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Without the aid of instruments

When Singers Were Eunuchs

TIME was when surgery played almost as important a part in the making of great sopranos as musical training did. The age of the musical eunuch (the *castrato*) is long gone by; but, if we may credit contemporary records, the passing of castrato music has deprived us of soprano voices which unassisted Nature has not been able to duplicate since.

We are assured that for voluptuous tone, flexible range, delicate texture, and exquisite *mezza-voce*, the castrato has never been equaled. "He was able," wrote the English historian of music Dr. Charles Burney, about one of these (though he might have been describing all of them), "to protract a tone to such a length as to excite incredulity even in those who heard him, who imagined him to have the help of some wind instruments." In any case, in the 18th century it was felt that singing such as this amply justified the cost of a highly delicate and painful operation inflicted on talented young male singers.

The greatest castrati of the past included Guadagni, Senesino, Farinelli, and Caffarelli. They were well paid and highly esteemed. Women especially went mad over them. These singers apparently had a peculiarly potent attraction for the other sex—this, in spite of the undeniable fact that most castrati were ungainly in appearance, usually fat, bloated, coarse, and repellently effeminate. "Women from every grade of society," reported one journalist in 1720, "peeresses incognito, melancholy wives of city merchants, wretched little streetwalkers, all jostled each other, their dresses of rich silks or of rags dragging in the dirty puddles among the stones—hungry for a look, a word." One woman, who is said to have swooned on hearing Farinelli sing, was quoted as having said when she recovered: "There is only one God, and only one Farinelli."

All the great opera composers of the distant past wrote their most florid arias for the castrati, who usually added embellishments of their own. Of these operas, only one has remained in the repertory: Gluck's *Orfeo*. The role of Orfeo, written for Guadagni, is today sung by a contralto.

They Are Superstitious



IT MAY be that luck plays almost as great a part as talent in the making of a singing career. But singers as a class seem to be more superstitious than almost any other group of musicians. These artists seem to run the entire gamut of superstitions, and not even the greatest of them are entirely free from the spell of omens, charms, and mysterious fears.

The number 13 plays a significant part in the careers of many artists. Charles Kullman, Lily Pons, Kathryn Meisle, and Ezio Pinza, all trust its potency. To support his belief Kullman gravely points out that he was born on January 13, that he signed his Metropolitan contract on June 13, and that his daughter was born on September 13. Equally impressive evidence is offered by Kathryn Meisle. The Chicago Opera engaged her on Friday the 13th, and her debut there took place on the 13th; her contract with Victor records was signed on the 13th,

and her first recording was released on February 13. Also, she made her debut at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York on Friday the 13th.

Lily Pons insists on having the number 13 appear wherever possible in her life. It is on her automobile plate, and it is the street number of her home in Connecticut. She uses it as an ingenious design on a trinket. She has also exploited the number on almost every major roulette table in Europe (before 1939) with striking success. Incidentally, her husband—the orchestral maestro, André Kostelanetz—proposed to her 13 times before she accepted him.

Luck charms are part and parcel of the baggage of many singing stars. Grete Stueckgold has a wooden elephant in her dressing-room on which she knocks three times before making a public appearance. Enid Szanthy has a handkerchief—now tattered—which she holds in her hand whenever she sings; it was given her by a friend shortly before her debut in Hungary, and she insists that it has brought her luck. Pinza has a doll that occupies a place of honor in his dressing-room; though he is reticent about its history, he does not hesitate to confess that it has been his magic charm for years. Maria Jeritza used to have a whole collection of religious medals that she wore to each of her performances.

Different singers have their own unique and personal superstitions. Rose Bampton thinks it good luck to whistle while applying make-up; whereas Julius Huehn believes that the day will be unlucky for him if he hears whistling while making up. For Lucy Monroe an ominous day is one in which she finds that the shoes in her closet are not in waist-high position. Gota Ljungberg insists upon getting out of bed right foot first and putting on her right stocking before her left. René Maison has his wife sit in his dressing-room while he is on the stage, fearing some mishap if she doesn't; as a consequence, she has never yet seen him in an opera performance.



Lily Pons

Marjorie Lawrence, celebrated Wagnerian soprano, is superstitious about a penny. Before appearing in opera, she insists that someone backstage present her with one. When she made her debut at Covent Garden some years back, the rise of the curtain was delayed a few minutes because not a single penny could be found on the person of anyone backstage; a messenger had to be sent to the box-office to get one.

Radio's favorite, Igor Gorin, has a superstition about a song. It is the Ukrainian folk song, *Viut Vitre*. He has sung this at every concert, either on the program proper or as an encore. He looks upon it as the magic charm of his career. It was *Viut Vitre* that he sang when he applied for admittance to the Vienna Conservatory many years ago; and it was this song that brought him a scholarship. He featured it, too, on the Hollywood Hotel radio program in which he long starred so successfully.

Perhaps the queerest superstition of all is Gertrud Wettergren's: she insists on being kicked three times in the backside for luck before she makes an appearance on the opera stage—she says it's an old Swedish custom.

T h e F a b u l o u s T e n o r

ENRICO CARUSO came to the Metropolitan Opera House in 1903, an acquisition of Heinrich Conried who had heard him only on a recording of *Vesti la giubba*. Legend has it that Conried learned about Caruso through Italian barbers, bootblacks, and waiters in New York.

At his debut, Caruso inaugurated the Metropolitan season; and once again the season was opened by him the year after that. Thus the tradition was established of starring Caruso on the opening perform-

ance every year. This continued for sixteen seasons with only one interruption.

The Caruso madness has not been equaled since by any other tenor anywhere. A pair of tickets for an opening-season performance brought about \$100, and sometimes much more than that. Caruso was the highest-paid tenor in the world. He had a unique contract with the Metropolitan, in which the space for his fee was always left blank. "I can't possibly pay you as much as you deserve," the manager explained; "so write in the figure that will satisfy you." Caruso, incidentally, always asked for less than he knew he could get. "If I am paid too much," he explained, "I get nervous singing."

His earnings were fabulous. He could earn \$100,000 for a few weeks of concert and opera appearances. He averaged more than \$100,000 a year from royalties on phonograph records. And his life earnings were said to have passed \$5,000,000.

In Caruso's time, recording sessions were long and arduous. On several occasions Caruso burst into tears out of sheer fatigue. But there were lighter moments, too. At one session with Geraldine Farrar (they were singing a duet from *Madame Butterfly*) the going was particularly tough. Caruso dashed across the street for a bit of stimulation at the corner bar. When he returned and began again to sing with Farrar, the prima donna mischievously interpolated these words into her aria: "Oh, you've had a highball!" And Caruso sang back: "No—I've had *two* highballs!" That record is now a precious collector's item.

Caruso was not only the most famous musician of his generation, but also something of a legend. He appeared in two motion pictures (one of them so bad it was never released). He was the victim of blackmailers, and once his daughter was in danger of kidnapping. Newspapers and magazines wrote about him and his personal life endlessly; the public seemed never to weary of reading about him, or of learning his views on anything and everything.

He was, of course, the idol of the opera public. The queues for Caruso performances have never been equaled in length. Opera lovers



Caruso

came to the box-office inquiring not when *Aida* or *Rigoletto* was to be performed, but when Caruso was singing next.

Once Caruso had his vanity seriously deflated. At a performance of *Pagliacci*, Albert Reiss was singing the principal tenor role. Caruso, standing in the wings, urged Reiss to let him sing the offstage serenade—and he had no indication that the audience knew the difference!

Caruso never sang on a full stomach, justifying himself through the following demonstration. He struck an empty crystal glass with a knife, and a beautiful clear tone rang out. But when the goblet was full, the sound produced after striking was thick, flat, and characterless.

Konrad Bercovici tells of a party in Hollywood during which Charlie Chaplin gave some impersonations of famous people. Suddenly he began to sing—and his voice was full, rich, and beautiful. "Why, Charlie," shouted one of his friends in amazement, "I didn't know you could sing!" "I can't," he answered; "I'm just imitating Caruso."

T h e y S t a r t e d A n e w

IT IS not generally known that Melchior, the foremost Wagnerian tenor of our time, was originally an insignificant baritone in Italian operas. He made his debut in his twenty-third year in *Pagliacci*, then toured Sweden in *Il Trovatore*. The Wagner music dramas were then remote from his thoughts. But the prima donna of the opera company in which he appeared—Mme. Charles Cahier—had prophetic insight as well as astute understanding of the voice, and when she heard him sing she realized that his voice belonged more naturally to the tenor range. She therefore urged him to abandon further appearances and

to begin study anew, this time as a tenor. She also recommended the Wagner music dramas as his proper vehicle because of the rich and heroic texture of his voice.

This was a critical decision for Melchior to make. It meant deserting his career when it had already been launched; returning to his student days after they had presumably ended; and, finally, acquiring an entirely new repertory. But he had faith in Mme. Cahier's wisdom. So he went into temporary retirement, worked diligently on vocal exercises, immersed himself in the study of the unfamiliar Wagner tenor roles. On October 18, 1918—five years after his original debut—he returned to the opera platform in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. This marked the beginning of a sensational career which took him through Europe and ultimately to the Metropolitan in New York. Thereafter, Melchior's place among the great singers of our time was secure.

Opera has other recent examples of singers willing to make a fresh start. Grace Moore was a glamorous star on Broadway, earning some \$3,000 a week in a series of musical-comedy successes beginning with the *Music Box Revue*. But mere monetary success did not satisfy her. She loved grand opera, dreamed of becoming a star. And she had the courage to bring this dream to realization. Deserting the lucrative Broadway stage, she went to Italy to study with Mary Garden. Then, returning to New York, she sang for Gatti-Casazza several times, until he finally gave her a contract for the Metropolitan. Her income was now only \$100 a week—a thirtieth of what she could earn if she returned to Broadway. But she was happy in her new career. Actually, her appearances with the Metropolitan were to pave her way in gold throughout the world, so that she achieved *both* her artistic career and a fortune.

The beloved American baritone, John Charles Thomas, made a similar decision, and to his advantage also. One of the most successful of Broadway musical-comedy stars (following appearances in *Apple Blossoms* and *Maytime*), Thomas had an earning power of several thousands of dollars a week. But, as with Grace Moore, financial suc-

cess alone did not mean much to him. He deserted his high-salaried assignments on Broadway to begin the serious study of singing. After his concert debut in 1918, he went to Europe, there to create a sensation in his operatic debut. In 1934 Thomas became a permanent member of the Metropolitan Opera, and ever since has been acclaimed one of the most celebrated and successful of American-born singers of opera and concert songs.

Then there is Richard Crooks. He was a struggling singer—the possibility of opera or concert success still remote—when an offer was made to him to appear in Sigmund Romberg's *The Student Prince* at a weekly salary of \$1,000. Despite the fact that he was in desperate need of money at the time, he turned down the offer. He was afraid that such a large income would soften him, accustom him to a standard of living he could not hope to maintain if he wished to return to serious music; and he did not want anything to deflect him from the goal he had set for himself. It took courage to toss aside \$1,000 a week, but Crooks had that courage. He was later handsomely repaid for this sacrifice, for he eventually became a world-famous concert artist, a favorite at the Metropolitan Opera House, and one of the highest-paid serious-music attractions over the radio.

She Whooped to Conquer

SCREWBALLS among singers are certainly no novelty; "temperamental" used to be the word for them. But the screwiest of them all was undoubtedly that now legendary figure among New Yorkers—the soprano named Florence Foster Jenkins, who died late in 1944 in her 76th year.

Possessor of one of the worst voices ever heard on any concert stage, of an ear completely deaf to correct intonation, and of a sublime incapacity to carry even a simple tune, she nevertheless succeeded in selling out any hall in which she appeared. In the fall of 1944, a few months

before her death, she sold out Carnegie Hall a month before the concert date, and on the day of her performance two thousand were turned away.

Her audiences came, of course, to laugh at her grotesque performances, made all the more absurd by the seriousness with which she took herself and her "art." But they paid good cash to hear her "sing"; they even bought her records by the thousands (she recorded them privately, and sold them in her studio at \$2 per disc). Measured by the box-office yardstick, she was certainly a success.

Season after season she gave her recitals: first in the Ritz-Carlton ballroom, then at Town Hall which, especially in recent years, she packed to the doors. Weeks before a Jenkins recital, the word of the forthcoming event would spread through music circles like wildfire. During the past few seasons it was impossible to buy, steal, or borrow a ticket to a Jenkins concert on the scheduled day.

She gave these concerts with all the seriousness of purpose of a great artist, going through formidable programs which many a celebrated singer would fear to undertake. She called herself a coloratura; she spoke of herself as the greatest coloratura of all time. And, with quiet confidence in her powers, she rushed in where angels feared to tread, taking in her stride such exacting numbers as the "Bell Song" from *Lakmé* or the Queen of the Night arias from *The Magic Flute*. She would whoop, screech, belch, yawp. She would struggle with a high note like a wrestler with an opponent. Passing from one note to another, she would usually miss her mark by a wide margin. Her vocal contortions resembled the vagaries of Willie Howard doing the coloratura part in the *Rigoletto* quartet.

To her recitals she added trimmings not usually indulged in by other artists. She wore elaborate costumes for different numbers, to match the atmosphere of the song or aria she was interpreting; one of these—she called it "The Angel of Death"—had wings. Her wardrobe was stuffed with pretentious robes, tiaras, corsages, capes, and wigs. At every concert she would completely change her attire half a dozen times.

Her audiences, of course, entered into the spirit of the thing.



Some of the gaiety is gone

Though they made no effort to suppress guffaws and hilarious outbursts at her ambitious vocal flights, at the sustained tones that sometimes sounded like chalk scraped across a blackboard, they would give her a thunderous ovation after each number and demand endless encores. In recent seasons, even the austere New York music critics joined in the game, speaking of her "incomparable" art, her "unique" style, her "inimitable" delivery, of the magic transformations which the great operatic arias underwent at her concerts. Mme. Jenkins took all these criticisms seriously, quoting them continually in her advertisements. She used them—as well as her sold-out houses—as proof that she was the greatest living singer.

Several times she made overtures to the Metropolitan Opera House, offering to take over the entire coloratura repertory and bring back (as she put it) the golden age of Tetrazzini. After her Carnegie Hall sell-out she redoubled her pressure on the Metropolitan management, convinced that it was only the envious singers of the regular company who were preventing her from joining them—and throwing them all in the shade.

Now that she is dead, some of the gaiety of the New York music season has gone with her. And there are those who are beginning to wonder just who had the last laugh on whom. For Florence Foster Jenkins succeeded where many world-famous artists failed: she could sell out Carnegie Hall whenever she chose to give a concert.

P o t p o u r r i

ADELINA PATTI, perhaps the greatest of the songbirds of recent memory, demanded \$100,000 for a proposed tour of America. Told that such an exorbitant sum was more than the President of the United States earned, she answered: "Well, why don't you engage him?"

Schumann-Heink was true to the tradition which dictated that opera

stars should be capacious and buxom. Once she was trying to squeeze through a narrow space backstage. A stagehand suggested that she "go sideways." "My dear man, I *can't*," she retorted. "I haf no sidevays!"

Her appetite was enormous. Once a steak of truly monumental proportions was set before her. "Don't tell me," Caruso said with awe, "that you intend to eat that alone!" "Not alone," the contralto answered, "but with potatoes and vegetables and salad."

One critic was told about a prima donna of fabulous physical proportions who had just been auditioned for the Metropolitan Opera House. "What was her aria?" the critic asked. "Tremendous," was the quick reply, "simply tremendous."

They still talk about the opera impresario who, when told by a prima donna that she wanted \$5,000 a night, exclaimed: "But, my dear lady, I only want you to sing!"

The prima donna of yesteryear was notoriously temperamental; and the clash of temperaments sometimes brought on bitter rivalries. The rivalry between Melba and Nordica was one of the most passionate of these. Every time one of the two women was featured on an opening-night performance of the Metropolitan, the other took it as a personal affront. The story goes that at one performance in which Melba was the star she happened to discover through a peephole that Nordica was sitting in the front row. Violently, Melba protested that she would not appear unless Nordica were ejected—forcibly if necessary. And it took some time for the manager to convince her that Nordica, having bought an admission ticket, had a legal right to a seat in the opera house.

When the Brazilian contralto, Bidu Sayao, first came to America, she succeeded in getting surprisingly generous terms. It seemed that, while her fee was being discussed, her mother kept whispering in her ear, and Bidu kept shaking her head. Every time she shook her head,



the agent hiked up his offer. Finally he exclaimed: "Really, Mme. Sayao, that is the very best fee I have ever been able to offer any artist, and beyond it I cannot go." Mme. Sayao accepted the offer, and when the contracts were being signed the agent asked her confidentially, "Tell me, what *were* your mother's whispered instructions?" "My mother," answered the contralto, "was merely trying to find out where the ladies' room was."

Sayao once engaged a new maid, to whom she carefully explained that the life of a prima donna was somewhat different from that of any other person. "You know, we have to keep irregular hours," Mme. Sayao said, "and no matter what time we get up, we are to be served breakfast." The very next day, Mme. Sayao—who had been up virtually all of the previous night—slept until past four in the afternoon. She awoke to find that her new maid had disappeared. Only a note was left behind: "*This* is just too ridiculous."

Leo Slezak, the great Wagnerian tenor of other days, was about to make his dramatic entrance in *Lohengrin* on the swan. The stagehand started drawing the swan across the stage before Slezak had a chance to seat himself on it. As the swan pulled away from him, he asked, "Does anybody know when the next swan will leave?"

Capsule criticism:

Of an unfortunate debut by an Italian tenor, one critic wrote: "Signor L—— made his debut in *Il Trovatore*. Never before was *Trovatore* so ill."

Tibbett's secret of success: He always stands on his head for a few minutes before making a public appearance.

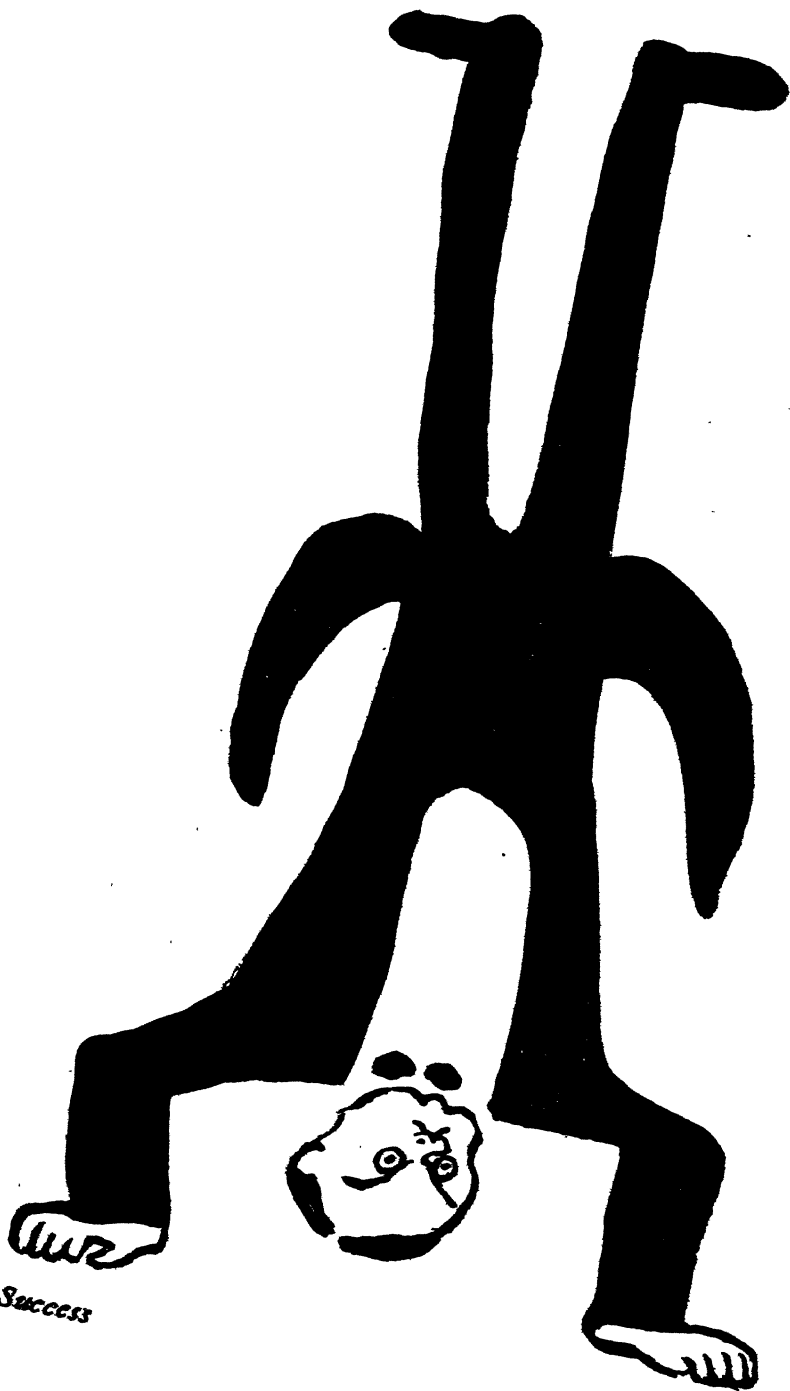
An incorrigible prankster, Tibbett once perpetrated a jest on Hollywood which it did not soon forget. As a guest at a fashionable party, he entertained with several songs. One of these he announced as a wonderful but unfamiliar gem by a little-known Russian genius

named Kovlikovosovsky. Then, without accompaniment, he improvised a mawkishly sentimental melody, providing it on the spur of the moment with words that, though sheer gibberish, did sound vaguely Russian. When he finished there was enthusiastic applause; the audience agreed that the song was simply marvelous. Then came an unanticipated epilogue. An exotic-looking actress, who *said* she was Russian, came over to congratulate him. A bit embarrassed over having put on such a hoax before a real Russian, Tibbett said: "I'm sorry that my Russian accent is so bad that you probably didn't understand a single word I said." "On the contrary," exclaimed the actress, "I understood every word clearly—your accent is *wonderful*!"

The Wagnerian tenor, Lauritz Melchior, is very touchy about his name. He detests having it mispronounced or misspelled. He carries around with him a printed card with the following poem on it, which he immediately shows to anyone who mistreats his name:

"There is a tenor big and jolly
Who's hardly ever melancholy;
There's just one thing can raise his ire—
To have his name misspelled Melchoir.
Such carelessness will bring a roar
Of rage from Lauritz Melchior!"

Melchior has a whole library of different-sized checkbooks. Since he pays a bill from whatever checkbook happens to be at hand, and since he is none too exact in his bookkeeping, his private financial affairs are usually in confusion. His manager once begged to take over the supervision of Melchior's personal finances. "I can handle them perfectly well myself," Melchior answered huffily—and a few days later paid the same bill three times.



Success

Secret

5

The Composers

When Bach Was Rediscovered

CONSIDERING Johann Sebastian Bach's undisputed position in the world of music today, his total eclipse at the time of his death, and for decades thereafter, is one of the phenomena of musical history.

His contemporaries considered his music "old hat"—belonging to the old world of counterpoint instead of to the then new world of homophony. Even his own sons spoke rather condescendingly of him. Soon after his death, a bundle of his manuscripts sold for \$40, and others were marketed for ten cents apiece. Solo sonatas in their original manuscript form were used as wrapping paper by a butcher shop; it is something of a minor miracle that any of them at all were saved for posterity. The copper plates of his last masterpiece, *The Art of the Fugue*, were scrapped. Ten years after his death, his widow died in the poorhouse. For more than eighty years J. S. Bach's music remained unheard; and when people mentioned "Bach," it was one of his sons who was meant—not Johann Sebastian. For almost a hundred years nobody could even identify his grave.

The rediscovery of Bach came slowly. In 1802 Forkel wrote a biography in which he tried to redirect the limelight on the master; but its influence was negligible. Then, in 1829 the young Felix Mendelssohn conducted a Berlin performance of the *Passion According to St. Matthew*—the first since Bach's day; even in Bach's own time it had been heard only in Leipzig. In 1833 the *St. John Passion* was heard. Seven years after this, Schumann and others launched the monumental project of issuing a complete edition of Bach's works; and the volumes as they came out gave the musical world its first conception of the incredible number and variety of his compositions. Thus it was not until a full century after his death that Johann Sebastian Bach was raised to something like the status he had always deserved—though even then most of his masterpieces were by many considered too dry to be worthy of performance.



How the butchers used Bach

In his own day, Bach was more famous as an organist than as a composer. His virtuosity, as a matter of fact, was the basis of more than one legend circulated in his time. The best known of these told of his entry into a church in disguise, going into the organ loft, and giving an impromptu performance. And the startled congregation is supposed to have exclaimed, "That is either the Devil—or Bach."

In 1717, a sort of musical duel was arranged in Dresden between

Bach and France's most celebrated organist, Marchand. But by chance Marchand heard Bach improvise, and just before the scheduled contest he fled from Dresden in the first available coach.

There is another version of this anecdote. The director of the Dresden orchestra, antagonized by Marchand's conceit and arrogance, decided to give him a stern lesson. He arranged for Marchand to give a performance—a set of improvised variations on a French air. The moment Marchand finished, Bach was summoned to improvise variations on the same theme. The contrast was so marked, that even Marchand was forced to concur in the unanimous verdict of the audience.

For his powers as an organist, Bach had a simple explanation: "There is nothing very wonderful about it. You have only to touch the right key at the right time, and the instrument does the rest."

One of Bach's greatest works for the piano was composed as a soporific. Count von Kayserling, Russian envoy to the Court at Dresden, suffered from insomnia, and every night he would have his harpsichordist, Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, play in an adjoining room until drowsiness was induced. Kayserling commissioned Bach to write a work for use on these occasions, and Bach complied with the *Goldberg Variations*, using a tender and soothing melody which he developed in a series of variations. Their purpose was to encourage sleepiness—though with what success, history has failed to record.

T h e G r e a t H a n d e l

HANDEL was known for his satirical tongue. An English singer complained of the way Handel was accompanying him on the harpsichord. One word led to another until the singer, in a fit of rage, threatened to jump up and down on the harpsichord until he smashed it. "Please do so," Handel told him. "I will advertise it—I'm sure more people will come to see you jump than to hear you sing."

When Handel's oratorio *Theodora* was first produced in London it was a failure. The explanation circulated at the time was that the Jews (who had sponsored his earlier oratorios, all on Jewish subjects) disliked it because it had a Christian story, and that the women disdained it because it had a virtuous one. Whatever the reason, *Theodora* was sung to half-empty houses—though the King attended every performance out of loyalty to his favorite composer. Once Horace Walpole met Lord Chesterfield coming out of the auditorium when the music had only just begun. "Is there no performance of *Theodora* this evening, my lord, or were you dismissed?" asked Walpole. "Neither," answered Lord Chesterfield. "I just do not wish to disturb His Majesty's privacy."

It was owing to Handel that the English language acquired the expression "the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee," to be so effectively utilized a century later in Lewis Carroll's *Alice*. During Handel's early career in England as an opera composer, his enemies imported to London the popular Bononcini from Italy to pit him against the Saxon master. Thereupon arose an artistic feud that stirred all of fashionable London, Handel and Bononcini each having his own set of supporters. It was to make fun of this feud that the London poet John Byrom wrote the following satirical verse:

"Some say, compar'd to Bononcini,
That Mynheer Handel's but a ninny;
Others aver that to him Handel
Is scarcely fit to hold a candle.
Strange all this difference should be
'Twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

In the entire realm of musical literature few masterpieces have been written in such a white heat of inspiration as was Handel's crowning work, the *Messiah*. The commission, which came to him from Dublin, arrived at a moment when his personal fortunes were at their lowest. He had suffered several failures on the London operatic stages, and

there were many to say that he was through. He was in bankruptcy, threatened with debtors' prison, depressed by petty rivalries and by the cabals formed against him, broken in health and spirit.

That he was able to pull himself out of this Slough of Despond to write his greatest work—and to write it in the incredibly short period of less than twenty-five days—is surely one of the more heartening phenomena in musical history. "It was the achievement of a giant inspired," as Newman Flower has written. "Handel was unconscious of the world during that time, unconscious of its press and call. His mind was enraptured. He did not leave the house; his man servant brought him food, and as often as not returned in an hour to the room to find the food untouched, and his master staring into vacancy. When he had completed Part II, with the 'Hallelujah Chorus,' his servant found him at a table, tears streaming from his eyes. 'I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself!' he exclaimed."

Today it is the custom for audiences to rise during the performance of the "Hallelujah Chorus." The tradition dates from March 1743—the London première of the work. When the singers began the chorus, King George II was so affected by the music that he rose impulsively in his box. The audience followed suit, and all remained standing until the chorus was completed. This practice has been adopted ever since at every performance of the *Messiah*.

P a p a H a y d n

SEVERAL of Haydn's most famous compositions have curious histories. The *Farewell* Symphony was composed as a gentle hint to Haydn's patron that the orchestra men wanted a vacation. In the last movement, one musician after another (as the musical score dispensed with his services) blew out his candle and quietly left the stage, until only two violins were left; finally even they disappeared, deserting the Kapellmeister, who remained alone on an empty stage. The patron

took the hint, and the next morning the men departed for their holiday.

The *Surprise* Symphony was written to keep audiences awake who habitually fell asleep during a slow movement. In the second movement a soft and gentle melody is suddenly terminated by a loud chord. At its first performance, during Haydn's visit to London, this movement so delighted the audience that it demanded a repetition.

The *Maria Theresa* Symphony was composed in honor of the Empress's visit to Esterházy, where Haydn was employed. And thereby hangs a tale. When he was a choirboy in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, Haydn visited Schönbrunn while the palace was in the process of repair. The scaffolding on one side of the palace offered a temptation irresistible to a youngster. Without a thought, Haydn climbed to the very top. From a distant window the Empress Maria Theresa saw him, and promptly ordered him whipped. Years later, Maria Theresa went to Esterházy and heard the symphony Haydn had written in her honor. When she praised him with warmth, Haydn playfully reminded her of the boyhood incident. "So you see, my good Haydn," the Empress commented, "that the flogging I ordered had a good effect!"

The *Raisermesser* (Razor) Quartet was composed during Haydn's first visit to London. On his first morning in that city, Haydn—a guest at the home of a publisher named Bland—tried to shave himself with a blunt razor. "I'd give my best quartet for a good razor!" he shouted. The publisher took him at his word and promised him a new razor if, in turn, he would write a new quartet. The bargain was sealed, and the *Raisermesser* Quartet became the price.

The E-flat major Quartet, Op. 33, No. 2, is known as *The Joke*. Haydn made a bet with a friend: he would prove to him that women always talk during a musical performance. In this quartet, the rondo, or last movement, was his trap. To catch the ladies at their gossiping, he put in a short adagio toward the close of the movement, after which he repeated the principal theme, inserting a two-bar rest after each phrase; then he included a four-bar rest before repeating the opening phrase of his theme. The prolonged and repeated pauses, of course, were meant to show up mercilessly the women's constant chattering during concerts.

When Haydn's great oratorio, *The Creation*, was first introduced in London, the manuscript arrived late, compelling the copyists to work night and day in writing out the parts. They finished the job in six days. When the chief copyist was congratulated on this achievement, he remarked: "Surely this is not the first time that *The Creation* was completed in six days!"

G e n i u s i n E x c e l s i s

THE yardstick by which all musical prodigies are measured—and to their disadvantage—is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Musical history surely offers no parallel for the musical feats of the child Mozart, which are so fabulous as to sound fictitious, though their authenticity has long been substantiated.

At three he could pick out chords on the harpsichord. At four, he could learn to play a brief work in half an hour; and at five he composed his first two pieces (still in existence). At seven he wrote his first sonata; and at eight, his first symphony.

He was only five when he was discovered busily at work on a composition. He had not yet learned to use a quill properly and, as he was putting down the notes on the paper, they were often supplemented by blots and smudges. His father, Leopold Mozart, glanced over his shoulder. "My, what a difficult composition!" he remarked with amusement as he noticed the complex mass of notes and blots. "Why shouldn't it be difficult?" answered the child. "It is a concerto."

He took to instruction so naturally that it was not long before he could play the harpsichord with virtuoso facility. He had an infallible ear, a photographic memory, and a sound musical instinct—and all of these in such a degree that music seemed to hold no difficulties for him. He could identify tones and chords; he could improvise for half an hour without repeating himself; he could play or write a complicated melody after a single hearing. He is believed to have played both organ



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart—Master

and violin without taking a single lesson. He was able to read at sight with the greatest facility. Once, during a performance of a quartet in his father's house, he played the second-violin part (which he had never seen before) with consummate ease. When his father expressed surprise, he said: "Surely, you don't have to study to play *second* violin!"

Herr Leopold was an ambitious man. It was not long before he decided to exhibit this phenomenon to all Europe. In 1762—Mozart's sixth year—he took the child on the first of his tours: to Munich. This was so successful that a second one was launched the same year, this time to Vienna. In Vienna the child won the hearts of all with his loveliness and his genius. On his arrival he spared his father the payment of custom duties by winning over the customs officer with a performance of one of his own pieces on the violin. At Schönbrunn, he played for and enchanted the Empress, Maria Theresa, who heaped kisses and embraces on him. He also performed for the Kapellmeister Wagenseil—tactfully choosing a concerto by Wagenseil.

Other tours followed, each more triumphant than its predecessor,

taking him from one end of Europe to the other. He was something of a one-ring circus. He played the harpsichord with the keyboard covered; he improvised on given themes; he identified the tones of any given chords; he made up compositions spontaneously. When he appeared in Frankfurt, he was advertised much as a circus performer might be: "The boy, who is not yet seven, will perform on the clavicin, or harpsichord; he will also play a concerto for the violin, and will accompany symphonies on the clavier, the manual or keyboard being covered with a cloth, with as much facility as if he could see the keys; he will instantly name all notes played at a distance, whether singly or in chords, on the clavier, or any other instrument, glass bell, or clock. He will finally, on both the harpsichord and the organ, improvise as long as may be desired and in any key."

At the same time Wolfgang was also proving his musical genius in more convincing (and more permanent) ways. In Paris he published four sonatas for violin and piano. In London he composed three symphonies. In Vienna he wrote an opera. Back in Salzburg, he composed an oratorio on a given text in one week to convince the skeptical Archbishop that it was he, and not his father, who was responsible for all the music that appeared under his name: the Archbishop ordered that Wolfgang be shut up in a special apartment by himself until the assignment was completed. The finished oratorio proved so good that the Archbishop had it both published and performed. In Italy, Mozart composed another opera (the composer conducting the première in Italy) which was so successful that it was given twenty performances.

The most celebrated of his musical exploits was the one that took place in Rome when he was only fourteen. In Holy Week every year, Allegri's *Miserere* was sung at the Sistine Chapel. Mozart listened to this complex polyphonic work once—then returned to his lodgings and wrote the whole composition from memory.

A young composer once came to Mozart for advice on how to develop creatively. "Begin writing simple things first," Mozart told him; "songs, for example." "But *you* composed symphonies when you

were only a child," the man exclaimed. "Ah," Mozart answered, "but I didn't go to anybody to find out how to become a composer!"

Of the stories told about Mozart, the most famous is probably that surrounding his composition of the *Requiem*, his last work.

In July of 1791 he was deep in work on his opera *The Magic Flute* when a mysterious stranger, dressed all in gray, came to the house to ask him to compose a requiem mass. He offered a generous fee, the only condition being that Mozart must never try to discover the identity of the man who was commissioning the work. The stranger added that he would return in a few weeks to receive the composition and make full payment.

History has since uncovered the fact that the visitor had come from a certain Count von Walsegg, who was in the habit of commissioning leading composers to write new works, which he later palmed off as his own. But to Mozart—at that time sick, depressed, haunted by the thought of death—the stranger seemed a messenger from the other world, bidding him write his own requiem.

Convinced that this *was* what he was writing—and that he was living on borrowed time to do it—Mozart worked feverishly. "I cannot remove the stranger's image from my eyes," he wrote in a letter. "I see him continually. He begs me, exhorts me, commands me to work. . . . I know that the hour is striking. I am on the point of death. . . . Thus I must finish my funeral song; I must not leave it uncompleted."

But he died before he could complete it, and the final passages were composed by his pupil Süßmayer. But Mozart had been right in his premonition: he had written his own requiem.

A musician one day asked Beethoven whether it was true that Süßmayer—not Mozart—had composed the *Requiem*. Beethoven replied: "If Mozart did not compose it, then the man who did compose it was a Mozart!"

“ I , T o o , A m K i n g ”

BEETHOVEN, the genius who could shape musical structures of grandiose or of delicate proportions, could never keep his own house in order. It was chronically in a state of dirt and semi-chaos, but he would never let a servant clean it because (he insisted) he would then be able to find nothing. He was always moving from one lodging to another, never staying long in any one place. Sometimes he would rent two or three flats simultaneously.

He was a proud man, sure of himself, confident of his powers. “With whom need I be afraid of measuring my strength?” he asked defiantly. Toward his benefactors or patrons he was rude and bumptious, often rewarding their generosity and tolerance with uncontrolled bursts of anger. He once called Prince Lobkowitz an ass. While playing at Prince Lichnowsky’s, he heard the murmur of conversation. “I will not play before such swine!” he shouted, banging down the lid on his instrument.

Walking along the street with Goethe, he upbraided the poet for baring his head to passing royalty. “It is *they* who should make way for us!” he exclaimed. Or, as he put it on another occasion: “I, too, am king!”

When absorbed in his music, he was absent-minded. Time and again he forgot to eat, and just as frequently at the café-house he would try to pay for food he had not yet ordered. Once he soaped his face for shaving and kept the lather on for a full day, forgetting what he had started out to do. At times his friends would put an entirely new outfit into his wardrobe in place of the shabby old clothing that hung there; Beethoven would put it on and never notice the difference.

He was easily roused to tempestuous outbursts. At the *Silbener Schwann*, one day he threw a dish of food at a waiter because he had ordered something else. He was extremely sensitive: sometimes a trivial word or a harmless remark caused him to break a friendship of long standing. He once misinterpreted a smile of Hum-

mel's as derogatory criticism of his Mass, and became estranged from him for years, refusing to listen to any explanations, stubbornly insisting that nothing could heal the breach. Stephan von Breuning, one of his dearest friends, once took him to his own apartment to nurse him back to health after he had fallen ill. When Beethoven recovered, he flew into a rage because Breuning had forgotten to give notice to the composer's landlady and Beethoven had to pay back-rent. When *Fidelio* was presented successfully in Vienna in 1806, he had it removed from the repertory because he thought he was being cheated of receipts due him. As the years passed, he grew more difficult. One nobleman said: "Even if we bought him a beautiful home, he would leave it in a fortnight. Beethoven is irresponsible!" Another remarked: "He is impossible. No one can do anything for him."

In some respects he was like a helpless child. He couldn't shave without cutting himself. He never seemed able to handle anything without breaking it. He would visit a fashionable salon and proceed to use the snuffers as a toothpick.

Where money was concerned he was shrewd, even inclined toward parsimony. During his frequent fits of economy he would eat only bread-crusts and beer, even when he was in funds. "I am a miser and a pauper," he once confessed—but he was only half right.

His love-life was complicated. He was strongly drawn to women, was madly in love many times in his life, and nearly always had one or more dominating his emotions. Yet his feelings were usually short-lived: he admitted that his longest love-affair had lasted only a few months. The women he chose were invariably very young, very attractive, gentle, delicate, cultured, usually well out of his reach because they came from the highest strata of Viennese society. He seemed to focus his choice on women who were unattainable—almost as if he were consciously taking precautions against falling into the trap of marriage, which he felt would be fatal to his creative evolution and independence.

One mystery, still unsolved, surrounds Beethoven's love-life. Soon after his death, a letter was found in a secret drawer of his desk. Written many years earlier, it was addressed "To the Immortal Beloved." Few

letters of such burning passion, such uncontrolled outburst of emotion, have ever been written. "Your love made me one of the happiest and, at the same time, one of the unhappiest of men," runs one passage. "Be calm. Only by calm consideration of our existence can we attain our life together—calm—love me—today—yesterday—what tearful longings after you—you—my life—my all—farewell. Oh, continue to love me, never misjudge the faithful heart of your beloved L. —Ever yours—Ever mine—Ever each other's—"

Who this "Immortal Beloved" was remains unexplained to this day. Was it Giulietta Guicciardi, to whom he had, dedicated his *Moonlight* Sonata? Was it Theresa von Brunswick, for whom he wrote the Sonata *Appassionata*? Was it the 15-year-old Theresa Malfatti? Or was the letter addressed—as some musicologists suspect—not to any one but to several women at the same time? Or, perhaps, was it meant for some non-existent woman of Beethoven's dreams? The mystery remains unsolved.





L'amour, toujours l'amour!

MANY other masters had strange, often abnormal, love-affairs.

There was Chopin—and George Sand. They were opposites. Six years older than Chopin, George Sand was strong-willed where he was weak; domineering where he was diffident; masculine and virile where he was soft, sensitive, and effeminate. He was almost a prude, while *her* love-affairs were the talk of Europe. Her irreligious nature shocked him, as did her utter disregard of convention; his fastidiousness was offended by her mannish clothing, her cigar-smoking, her brusqueness. Yet he was strongly drawn to her; and she dominated him.

When Chopin first met her, he described her as a “repellent woman.” “Is she really a *woman*?” he asked. Yet, slowly, inescapably, Chopin was attracted by her genius, her strength, her assertive individuality, by her brilliant conversation and her vibrant personality. Before many months had passed, one of the most tempestuous love-affairs in musical history was in the making.

Chopin was infatuated with her, wanted her as a lover and a mistress. But though Sand adored Chopin, she treated him more like a son than like a lover. The relationship was a strange and stormy one.



When George Sand's son fell ill, his mother decided to take him to the warmer climate of Majorca. Chopin pursued her, caught up with her at Perpignan, and then accompanied her to Palma where they settled in a villa. Chopin had thought that this flight to Majorca would prove a wondrous love idyll; he allowed his romantic imagination to run loose. Actually his dream betrayed him. The weather was consistently damp and chill, playing havoc with his sensitive constitution, and bronchitis set in. He became deathly ill, then subject to strange fantasies, and finally sunk in melancholia. To complicate matters, the good Palma townspeople—shocked by the refusal of Sand and Chopin to go to church, and terrified by the suspicion that Chopin was tubercular—chased them out of their villa. All other places closed to them, the lovers found lodgings in a damp, dark, bleak, deserted monastery.

Chopin, broken in health, left Majorca with no little relief. He was running away from a nightmare. Tenderly, Sand nursed him back to health in the south of France, and by the time he returned to Paris his vitality and good spirits had returned.

For the next seven years, they were intimately, inextricably bound up with each other. In Paris, during the winters, Chopin lived near

her, and was a familiar figure in her famous salon. During the summers he lived with her and her children at Nohant. He was not only infatuated with her: he leaned on her for support, looked upon her as lover and mother in one, relied on her for advice and direction. Yet these years were far from happy for Chopin. He was ashamed of his passion. He was in constant friction with his beloved. Most curious of all, though they seemed to live in the same home, they did not have sexual intercourse—if we can accept the testimony of Sand herself. “For seven years I have lived as a virgin with him. . . . I have become so weary of passions and so disillusioned that even without effort or sacrifice I have grown old before my time.”

She grew tired of him—tired of his weakness, sickness, jealousies, fantasies, infatuation. A family quarrel in which Chopin sided with Sand’s daughter against the mother led directly to the final break between them.

This break was Chopin’s death sentence. His will to live was gone, even his will to create. The two met only once more, for a fleeting moment, when they passed each other silently on the stairs of a friend’s house. On his deathbed, Chopin whispered: “She told me that I should not die except in her arms.”

The romance of Robert and Clara Schumann, if less frenetic, was not without its measure of turbulence. Robert met Clara Wieck when he was eighteen and she only nine. A shy and reticent child, she was for a long time unnoticed by the young musician; but Clara confessed later that *she* had fallen in love with Robert when she was twelve. As for him, admiration for the girl’s brilliant progress as a pianist gradually blossomed into a more personal interest. Shortly before her sixteenth birthday, as she was on the eve of leaving for a concert tour, Robert came to say good-bye. Then he walked thoughtfully down the stairs, followed by Clara, who lighted his way with a lamp. At the foot of the stairs he suddenly turned and took her impetuously into his arms.

But Clara’s father, Friedrich Wieck, looked with acute disfavor on a match that he feared would disrupt his daughter’s promising

career, and for several years he resorted to deceit, lies, strategy, sometimes even brute force to keep them apart. He threatened to kill Robert if he persisted in his suit. Continually he poisoned Clara's mind against her lover. However, like two characters in a sentimental Victorian novel, Robert and Clara kept their love alive and intense through these turbulent years. They arranged clandestine meetings in spite of the formidable obstacles put in their way—one of these meetings taking place after two years of separation. They exchanged secret notes. But more often they were kept apart—suffering under a separation that sometimes seemed too painful to endure any longer. These were harrowing years for the sensitive Robert, years of anguish and heartbreak; but his love never wavered, nor his determination to win his beloved. Eventually, Robert was compelled to fight Father Wieck in the law courts, and, winning his case, he was at last able to marry his beloved.

Clara Schumann, in her turn, inspired a strange, enigmatic love in Johannes Brahms. A victim of mother-fixation, and of some rather sordid sex experiences in early boyhood, Brahms was perpetually in search of his ideal woman—only to flee in terror whenever he thought he had found her. He loved women, loved some of them ardently. He visited brothels regularly. Yet from marriage he ran as though it were a plague; and he sublimated his emotions in his compositions.

There was, for example, Agathe von Siebold, whom he wooed passionately. Yet when marriage was discussed, he flinched, "I love you! I must see you again! But fetters I cannot wear!" he wrote to her. He broke the affair and, characteristically, found emotional satisfaction later by writing a sextet to her.

Then there was his Viennese pupil, the young and beautiful Elisabeth von Stockhausen. Brahms became so infatuated with her that he had to ask her to stop taking lessons from him. And there was Julie, one of Clara Schumann's daughters—but before he was forced to come to a decision she became engaged to someone else.

His deepest and most prolonged love, however, the one he nursed to his dying day, was for Clara Schumann. For some years he was

one of the dearest friends of both Robert and Clara Schumann; and during the last two years of Robert's life Johannes realized that he was in love with Clara. Robert's death cleared the way for him, yet he hesitated—and hesitated for years. He expressed his passion for Clara in letters and in musical works, sometimes curiously addressing her as “my dearly beloved mother”—a none too tactful phrase to use to a woman fourteen years his senior, but one that tells us volumes about his psychological maladjustment to love. He respected her profound musicianship, turned to her for criticism, advice, and praise. She was his most intimate friend, and in her presence he was happier than with any other single person over an extended period. Yet he avoided marriage, even though his attachment to her never really wavered. Something deep within him kept him from getting married, even to one so dear as Clara. Some biographers suspect that he may have been sexually incapable of deriving pleasure from good women, and that, aware of this failing, he realized that marriage would be disastrous.

An even more curious love-story is Tchaikovsky's. An influential patron, Nadejda Filaretovna von Meck, became interested in him and provided him with a substantial annual income. Thus began a 13-year relationship that is surely one of the most curious ever recorded. A series of letters was exchanged between Tchaikovsky and Nadejda in which an ardent, even passionate, love was nursed and developed. Yet, by mutual consent, the two never met. Sometimes they saw each other for brief moments from a distance in the concert hall or in the streets of Moscow. Sometimes, as in Florence, Tchaikovsky would walk under her window at a specified hour each day so that she might catch a glimpse of him. But, during thirteen years of intense protestations of love and admiration by each for the other, they remained voluntarily apart.

Once again we have little but conjecture to go on. Did Tchaikovsky prefer it that way because he was a homosexual? Did Mme von Meck prefer it that way because she felt that the difference in their stations in life constituted a gap that could never be bridged?

The curious affair ended abruptly. While on a trip to the Caucasus,

Tchaikovsky had a letter from his patroness saying that she had suffered serious financial reverses and would have to withdraw his pension. Immediately he sent her a warm reply expressing his sympathy and hoping that their friendship might continue. But his letter went unanswered, as did the other entreaties that followed it. On his return to Moscow, however, he learned that Mme von Meck was not in financial trouble at all, and never had been; that she had cooked up the story as a pretext for terminating their relationship. Once again, unanswerable questions arise: Had Mme von Meck grown bored by the whole affair? Or had she suddenly discovered that Tchaikovsky was a homosexual and been shocked by the fact?

R o s s i n i a n a

ROSSINI often told his friends that he would much rather have been a cook than a composer. He was a facile composer, and a lazy one. While composing in bed, if a sheet of music fell on the floor, he preferred rewriting it to getting out of bed and picking it up.

Psychopathically superstitious, Rossini dreaded most the day Friday and the number 13. He died on Friday the 13th.

"Meyerbeer and I are worlds apart," he told a critic. The latter expected a learned dissertation on the differences between their operatic styles, but Rossini added: "Meyerbeer likes sauerkraut, and I, macaroni."

As a guest of King George IV in London, Rossini one evening invited the King to sing to his accompaniment. His royal host made numerous errors, but, ignoring them all, Rossini went on with his playing. Later, King George congratulated Rossini on his tact. "Sire," replied the composer, "it is my duty to accompany you—even to hell."

His sarcasm could cut as sharply as a razor. A young composer

offered to play two original works for him. Rossini listened to the first of these, and then said quickly, "I like the other one better."

Another young musician brought him a funeral march that he had composed in honor of Beethoven. After glancing at the first page, Rossini remarked: "I would much rather be looking at a Beethoven funeral march written in your honor."

His opera *William Tell* was given in a truncated version at the Paris Opéra, much to his chagrin. One day, the manager told him that he planned a special opera evening at which the second act of the opera would be performed. "Surely not all of it!" Rossini exclaimed.

A practical joker, Rossini once perpetrated a jest that almost had serious consequences. Early in his career—this was in Venice—the libretto furnished him for a commissioned opera proved to be so absurd that he decided to treat it satirically. In his music, therefore, he did everything perversely: The bass sang soprano notes; the soprano was assigned the range of a baritone. The chorus danced; the ballet was made to sing. The orchestra tapped their lamps and stamped their feet. The Venetians were so infuriated by these antics that they began throwing things on the stage; they tore up the seats; they threatened to demolish the theater itself. While all this was going on, they were shouting for the composer and laying siege for him at the stage door. Fortunately, Rossini was able to make his escape (he even fled from Venice), as otherwise he would doubtless have suffered bodily injury.

Another prank had happier consequences. In an early opera of his, one role was assigned to a contralto whose voice was poor except for her B-flat, which she produced successfully. So Rossini wrote an aria for her using that note exclusively, while the orchestral accompaniment carried the melody. The audience was so delighted with this innovation that, much to her amazement and pleasure, they gave the singer a rousing ovation—probably the first she had ever received.

‘ ‘ S c h u b e r t P l a i n ’ ’

FROM the copious writings of Schubert's intimate friends—Hüttenbrenner, Spaun, Bauernfeld, Anna Fröhlich, and others—we get a vivid picture of the great composer.

“Every day at six o'clock in the morning, Schubert seated himself at his writing desk and composed without a break till one o'clock in the afternoon, smoking a few small pipes. If I came to see him in the morning, he would play to me what he had ready and wait to hear my opinion. If I praised any song especially, he would say: ‘Yes, that was a good poem; and when one has something good the music comes easily—melodies just stream from one, so that it is a real joy.’”

After work, there was the café-house, where Schubert would “drink a cup of coffee and smoke for several hours while reading the papers. When in ordinary financial circumstances, Schubert always drank Bavarian beer at the *Schwarze Katze* in the Annastrasse, or at the *Schenke* near St. Peter's, and smoked a great deal while doing so. When he had more money he drank wine, or, if the circumstances were particularly happy, we had punch. When the blood of the vine glowed in him, he did not rant, but moved into a quiet corner to give himself up to a comfortable frenzy. A smiling tyrant who if possible would destroy something—glasses, for instance, or a plate, or a cup—he would sit there and grin and contract his eyelids, so that his eyes became very small.”

Schubert was described as “not of very striking appearance. He was short, somewhat corpulent, with a full round face. His brow had an agreeable curve. Because of his nearsightedness, he always wore eyeglasses. He never concerned himself with his dress, and he detested going into higher society because it necessitated careful dressing. In short, he found it impossible to discard his spoiled frockcoat for a black suit. To bow or scrape or cringe in society was odious to him, and to be flattered for his genius disgusted him.”

His friends knew him to be the very soul of generosity. “When perchance Schubert had sold a few songs or a cycle of songs, like those

from Walter Scott for which he was paid 500 florins, he appeared to us a sort of Croesus. He intended to husband it well, but as usual it got no further than good intentions. At the beginning there was living in plenty, 'treating' and spending money right and left. Then there would come a period of lean days again. It was to a period of Schubert prosperity that I owe the fact of having heard Paganini play. The five gulden which this concert demanded were quite beyond the powers of my purse. That Schubert should hear him was a matter of course. But he would not hear him again without me, and he was extremely angry when I refused to accept a ticket from him. He dragged me with him. After the concert, an extra bottle of wine was drunk at a restaurant at the expense of enthusiasm."

It is doubtful if in the entire realm of art there is any counterpart to Schubert's spontaneity. He wrote masterpieces as effortlessly as he breathed. Ideas came to him so easily that often the melody for a new song rose in his mind before he had finished writing down the one before it.

Many stories are told illustrating his amazing facility. He was only eighteen when he wrote one of his greatest songs—that with which a new era in Lied writing is said to begin: *Der Erlkönig*. And he wrote it in one sitting! He was waiting for his friends Spaun and Mayrhofer, when he chanced on Goethe's poem. His friends arrived, and waited for him while he wrote this masterpiece—"as quickly as it could be written" in the words of Spaun, "and in the shortest possible time."

When Rossini's *Tancredi* scored a great success in Vienna, Schubert made a wager with his friends that he could write an overture in the style of Rossini in ten minutes. The wager was accepted. There in the café-house, where they were sitting and drinking, Schubert composed his tuneful and charming *Overture in the Italian Style* in less than the specified time!

While he was visiting some friends at Linz, one of them suggested that Schubert's song, *Die Forelle*, might be made the basis for a movement of a larger work. Schubert thereupon sat down and wrote a quin-

tet, using the song as the theme for the fourth movement. More incredible still, he wrote it down not as a score, but with each instrumental part given individually. Later he played the piano part through impromptu, while the strings played their parts from manuscript.

Perhaps the most famous example of Schubert's spontaneity is his song *Hark, Hark, the Lark*. He and his friends were sitting in a beer-garden idly turning the pages of a volume of Shakespeare, when Schubert came upon the lovely lyric in *Cymbeline*. "Oh, such a beautiful melody has just come to me," he cried. "If only I had some paper—" One of his friends quickly drew staves on the back of a menu, and then and there, surrounded by the noise and movement of a busy beer-garden, Schubert wrote the gem—and within a few minutes.

One of Schubert's great song cycles was launched in a similar way. At the *Rebhuhn* café, a friend of Schubert's brought him a volume of Müller's poetry. The others being deep in their merry conversation, Schubert started to glance through the verses. After a few minutes, he called impatiently for paper. And amid all the hubbub of the café, and with his friends looking on, Schubert conceived the first song of his exquisite song cycle, the *Müllerlieder*.

Many of Schubert's masterpieces were found years after his death, lying dusty and forgotten in closets. When, in 1838, Robert Schumann visited Vienna, he paid a call at the house of Schubert's brother Ferdinand. He was both amazed and delighted to learn that Ferdinand had in his possession a whole pile of Franz's manuscripts, which he had not bothered to turn over to publishers and which by now had grown yellow. Browsing through these, Schumann found not only many exquisite songs, but also the monumental C major (Ninth) Symphony.

In 1867, George Grove in England suspected that a rich mine of Schubert gold must lie hidden in Vienna, and he went in search of it, taking with him the twenty-five-year-old Arthur Sullivan. They concentrated their search on the publishing house of Spina, where they were allowed to hunt through stacks of neglected manuscripts. In *An Almanac for Music-Lovers*, Elizabeth C. Moore writes:

"They went to work: Grove pulling out something that looked promising, and Sullivan playing it on the piano. Their pile of loot grew higher with every hour. By midnight they had recovered all the lost part-books of *Rosamunde*, a Trio, a *Stabat Mater*, and a great many songs. At two in the morning they stopped, played a triumphant game of leap-frog around Spina's room, and called it a day."

K e y b o a r d B a r n u m

THE personality of Franz Liszt displayed so many contradictory traits that biographers have found it an elusive job to draw an accurate picture. He was both religious and worldly—exalted by spiritual ardors, yet at the same time drawn to the most sensual pleasures. He is believed to have had twenty-five love-affairs, and is known to have had several illegitimate children—one of whom was Cosima, who married Bülow first and then Wagner. Yet he was always attracted to the Church, and in 1879 submitted to the tonsure and took the vows of four minor orders, becoming the Abbé Liszt. He loved soft living, luxury, elegance, and physical pleasures. He could be humble and self-effacing—and also the arch-egotist demanding adulation. He could live the life of a recluse—and also demand the society of sycophantic admirers and the fawning company of the highborn. He was a high-minded artist true to his mission—yet no pianist before him (and practically none since) was so given to sham, to self-glorification, to "ham" dramatics, to quackery, to petty subservience to the audience.

The crowning paradox of his character was the fact that the Kapellmeister of Weimar and protagonist of the "Music of the Future"—and in both roles an idealistic musician—was also capable of the most sordid and degrading exhibitionism when he faced an audience. No artist ever wooed his audiences more passionately than did Liszt. To please them he would indulge in any sort of artistic contortions, speak



*The composer of Hungarian Rhapsody
Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15*

ing figuratively. It is not generally realized that it was Liszt who started the fashion of placing the piano *sideways* on the concert stage; he did this because he had been told he had an impressive profile, and he wanted to exhibit it to best advantage. Always conscious of his personal appeal, he dressed with ostentation for his public appearances; when, for example, he gave a concert in Budapest after a long absence, he wore a costly and elaborate Magyar costume bought expressly for the occasion.

In order to impress his sentimental admirers Liszt adopted his well-known hair style of long, flowing locks. And, while playing, he would (like a carefully coached actor) use movements of hair and head and eyes, the quivering of lips and nostrils, to stress the emotional quality of the music. If the music was sensuous, he would turn his head and fix his eyes on some one woman in the audience, as though playing exclusively to her. "When he does this," remarked a woman in Paris, "you could swoon!"

No means were too extravagant for him to employ in order to dramatize himself and his playing. He often prearranged to have professional fainters swoon at certain dramatic moments in his playing. At one time, he waited expectantly for his hireling to faint; the woman missed the cue and Liszt, upset by having his signal ignored, fainted himself.

To electrify his audiences with his dazzling technique, he would play the most flamboyant pyrotechnics he could find—usually his own showy operatic fantasies and potpourris, which glorified digital dexterity. When sternly chided once by a fellow-artist for writing and performing such shoddy stuff, Liszt protested: "Do you think that, if I wrote only works like my *Dante* and *Faust* symphonies, I could serve my friends trout and iced champagne?"

At one concert in Paris, Liszt performed the Beethoven *Kreutzer* Sonata with the well-known French violinist Massart. The audience, which had come primarily to hear Liszt, kept interrupting the performance with shouts of "*Robert le Diable!*"—referring, of course, to Liszt's flashy fantasia on Meyerbeer's opera. Liszt was not at all disconcerted, nor were his artistic sensibilities offended by this rude interruption. Instead, *in the middle of the sonata* he motioned to

Massart to leave the stage, and himself then played the bravura piece, to the great delight of the audience. When he was through, he recalled the violinist and they went on with the performance of the *Kreutzer*!

Though in his music Liszt was the arch representative of nationalistic music (of which his rhapsodies are characteristic), he couldn't speak a word of Hungarian.

He always insisted on wearing the same kind of clothes regardless of weather or temperature. "Why should I take notice of the weather," he asked haughtily, "if it insists upon disregarding me?"

B r a h m s — w i t h A c i d

FEW other musicians in Vienna were so sharp-tongued as Brahms. "Whenever I compose a success," he said of a competitor, "*he* immediately composes it again."

"Your new symphony is very good," remarked one Viennese musician to Brahms, "but it continually reminds me of *other* music." "What other music?" Brahms inquired. "Your next symphony?"

Many composers in Vienna were influenced by Brahms's style. Brahms, listening to a work of one of these composers, asked, "Which piece of mine is that?"

Of Rubinstein's *Nero* he said: "The music is a wonderful depiction of Nero's character—it's *horrible*."

To one young composer, who brought him the manuscript of a symphony, his only comment was: "What beautiful music paper you use!" To another, who had set a Schiller poem to music: "I still think that Schiller's poem is one of the greatest ever written."

Sometimes the shoe was on the other foot. Brahms and Georg Henschel were strolling along a Vienna boulevard when they came to a house with a commemorative plaque on it. "The day after I die,"

said Brahms, "they'll put up a sign in front of my house, too." "Of course," said Henschel; "and it will read HOUSE TO LET."

Although Brahms's earnings were enough to support him comfortably—he even achieved a certain measure of affluence—he was a notorious penny-pincher. For thirty years he lived in the same ugly, crowded apartment in the Karlsgasse in Vienna, which he made no attempt to change or to beautify; it did not even boast a bath. He wore the cheapest clothes obtainable, little concerned about his appearance. Whenever he traveled he went third class; and when he ate out, it was always in the cheapest restaurants. When returning to Austria from his travels, he used to smuggle in Turkish tobacco (and his friends did likewise for him) rather than pay the duty. Once he was caught, and had to pay a fine of 70 gulden.

Brahms was a guest at the home of a Viennese vintner, who opened up a bottle of rare wine with the following comment, "What Brahms is among composers, this Rauthaler is among wines." Brahms interposed hastily, "In that case, let's drink a bottle of Bach!"

Asked why he had grown that patriarchal beard of which he was so proud, Brahms explained that he was competing with Michelangelo's *Moses*. One Viennese commented: "Before he grew his beard, Johannes was mistaken for Clara Schumann's son. Now he is taken for her father."

Capsule criticism: Of Brahms's often ungrateful violinistic writing in his concerto, Hans von Bülow said: "Bruch wrote a concerto *for* the violin; Brahms wrote one *against* it."

A n d B r u c k n e r

ANOTHER celebrated composer in Vienna, a contemporary of Brahms, was Anton Bruckner. Guileless as a child, Bruckner's one passion was his own music. He made no effort to conceal the fact that he considered it immortal. "When God calls me to Him and asks, 'Where is the talent I gave you?' I shall hold up the manuscript of my *Te Deum* and I know He will be a compassionate judge."

Whenever he listened to his own music, Bruckner would go into a trance. Once, at a rehearsal of one of his symphonies conducted by Hans Richter, a question arose as to whether one note should be F-sharp or F-natural. Richter turned to the composer for the answer. "Anything you wish, master," Bruckner cried out in delirium, "anything you wish. Only go on playing!"

So humbly thankful was he when a work of his was performed, that he sometimes expressed his gratitude with maudlin naivete. After a rehearsal of his Fourth Symphony Bruckner, his face shining with happy excitement, came up to Richter, seized the conductor's hand and pressed in it a token of his gratitude—a silver dollar!

The one other composer for whom he had an almost equal share of adoration was Wagner. When Bruckner first heard *Tristan* in 1865, he stood at a distance and gazed at Wagner for hours, afraid to approach him. In 1882, after hearing the first performance of *Parsifal* in Bayreuth, Bruckner approached Wagner and fell on his knees: "Master, I worship you!" he said reverently.

For years, Brahms and Bruckner were each antagonized by the other's music. During one unfortunate meeting, Brahms told Bruckner: "I really can't make out what you are trying to say in your works."

"Never mind, Doctor," said Bruckner, "it's all right, because I feel the same way about your music."

In the attempt to bring about a more sympathetic understanding between them, friends of both composers arranged a meeting at the

Rothem Igel café in Vienna in the autumn of 1889. Bruckner, quite amiable, came early and had consumed two or three portions of noodle soup before Brahms arrived. For the next few minutes there was frigid silence. At long last, Brahms, hoping to dispel the embarrassing quiet, called for a bill-of-fare. With feigned good humor, he called out to the waiter: "Now we shall see what there is to eat. Waiter, bring me smoked ham and *knödel*." At once Bruckner chimed in: "Ah, that's it, Doctor. Smoked ham and *knödel*. At last we have a point on which we can agree."

This witticism eased the tension for a couple of hours. The meeting, however, had no permanent results. After they parted that evening, Bruckner and Brahms maintained their aloofness, regarding each other's artistic productions contemptuously.

M a s t e r s i n g e r

PROBABLY nowhere else in the field of music can we find in one man so startling a combination of nobility and sordidness as we find in Richard Wagner. Consider the grandeur of the *Götterdämmerung* music or the spirituality of *Parsifal*—and then look at the baseness of the composer who created both. Wagner had many of the traits that make a man contemptible in the eyes of his fellow human beings: inflated vanity, egomania, selfishness; unscrupulous disregard of ethical and moral codes; hypocrisy, duplicity, irritability. He was a liar and a gambler. He was hard even on those whom he liked, and ruthless to his enemies. He was violently anti-Semitic, yet did not hesitate to call upon Jews to help him when he needed them. He was always borrowing money in prodigious sums (with no intention of ever returning it), repeatedly had to flee from his creditors, and once actually landed in a debtors' jail. And he spent money—money that was not his—lavishly, often on the most frivolous of luxuries. He had almost no capacity for gratitude, and while he was very sensuous and passionate

it is doubtful if he was capable of tenderness. He accepted favors as if they were due him, and often rewarded his generous benefactors with treachery and malice. His conscience did not disturb him in the least in accepting the munificent hospitality of Otto Wesendonck and then proceeding to steal the love of Wesendonck's wife. Nor was he disturbed for one moment by the fact that the wife of his dear friend Hans von Bülow bore three children by him without her husband's suspecting anything! One of these three children, indeed, was brazenly named Isolde.

His amatory affairs were complicated by the fact that he was given to loving and pursuing several women at once. This unscrupulousness was once illustrated when at his Zurich refuge, *The Asyl*, he read aloud parts of his libretto for *Tristan und Isolde* to an audience that included his wife, his mistress, his mistress's husband, and his future wife and her husband.

Wagner owned more than twenty-four dressing gowns, each of a different color. He used to select his gown according to his mood of the day, fastidiously adjusting the exact shade of his robe to the exact nuance of his feelings. And one of his idiosyncrasies was to stand in front of a mirror and tip his hat to himself.

F a t h e r v s . S o n

MUSICAL history is rich with tales of bitter rivalry between musicians: Rameau against Pergolesi; Gluck against Puccini; Handel against Bononcini; Bruckner against Brahms; Brahms against Wagner, etc. But none of these is stranger or more dramatic than that which existed between the two waltz-kings of Vienna—the two Johann Strausses, father and son.

The debut of the second Johann Strauss, as conductor of café-house music, took place on October 15, 1844. And surrounding that debut is

one of the more curious tales of musical history. Throughout Vienna it was known that Johann's father, the first Johann Strauss (also a waltz-king) had deserted his family some years earlier to set up house with his mistress; that he had first discouraged his son Johann's musical education, then openly forbade him to pursue a career as a café-house musician. To Vienna, therefore, the 19-year-old Johann's attempt to compete against his own father looked like the defiant gesture of a victimized son toward a harsh father. Vienna had had musical rivalries before—but never one like this. Father against son. Strauss against Strauss.

When Father Strauss heard rumors that his son was assembling an orchestra of his own in order to make his debut, he sent his crony Hirsch to frustrate the plan. One by one, the leading cafés of Vienna were visited by the indefatigable Hirsch; one by one—because the elder Strauss was a man of influence—these cafés were persuaded to close their doors to the young man. Only one café-house owner was deaf to Hirsch's persuasions: Dommayer, proprietor of the popular and fashionable Casino at Hietzing, immediately realized what a strategic stroke it would be for him to feature young Johann's debut. Well he knew the publicity value of a contest between son and father, and he was confident that Johann and his orchestra could attract half Vienna to his Casino.

And so, Hirsch notwithstanding, the billboards of Vienna soon announced a momentous musical event—the debut of the son Johann Strauss as director of his own orchestra at Dommayer's Casino in Hietzing.

The announcement burst like a bombshell in Vienna. Tongues buzzed; newspapers commented. Some saw in the debut an impudent attempt on the part of the son to usurp his father's hitherto unassailable position in Vienna's cafés. Others, remembering that the father had abandoned his family, were on the boy's side.

All Vienna, it seemed, took the road for Hietzing on the evening of that October 15. Half an hour before the performance the police had to be called to restore order outside the Casino, while it was so crowded inside that (as one Viennese journal reported) "it was more

difficult to get a table than a seat in the English House of Lords." Friend and foe alike were there—those who prayed for young Johann's success and those who hoped for his defeat. Father Strauss did not come, but sent his two closest friends—Haslinger and Hirsch—to create a disturbance which would convert the debut into a fiasco.

Then young Johann leaped upon the platform, violin and bow in hand, to take his place in front of the orchestra. Young, graceful, handsome, he was unmistakably the son of his father, though the lines of his face were softer, the skin lighter, and the eyes more poetic. The violin bow was raised. The orchestra played Auber's overture to *La Muette de Portici*. "Now he swings the bow; now he strikes up," one Viennese critic wrote afterward. "An electric current runs through us, from top to toe. The man sparkles like a galvanic battery, and the cry resounds: 'This is a worthy son of the father!'"

But the audience would not commit itself until the young conductor had played a waltz, an original waltz—true touchstone of any café-house Kapellmeister. Johann played his set of waltzes (Opus 4) called *Die Gunstwerber*. A riot of enthusiasm followed, and he was compelled to repeat the waltzes three times. Other original waltzes followed, as the acclaim of the Casino public rose in an ever-increasing crescendo. *Sinngedichte* he had to repeat nineteen times! Polkas and quadrilles—some of them Johann's own—followed. Finally came a waltz whose strains were not unfamiliar to the Viennese: it was the *Lorelei-Rheinklänge*, one of Father Strauss's masterpieces. To the sentimental Viennese, so touching a gesture by a son to his father could not fail to bring tears. Hirsch looked at Haslinger; both of them had moist eyes. Then—though they did not speak to each other—each sensed what he had to do. They rushed to the platform, not to create a disturbance, but to lift Johann on their shoulders and carry him in triumph through the Casino, as the public went wild with enthusiasm.

"Ah, these Viennese," wrote the editor of *The Wanderer*. "Exactly as they were ten years ago. A new waltz player, a piece of world history!" Then he added: "Good night, Lanner! Good evening, Father Strauss! Good morning, Son Strauss!"

P o t p o u r r i

WITH complete impartiality, Charles Lamb once wrote:

“Some cry for Haydn, some Mozart;
Just as the whim bites, for my part,
I do not care a farthing candle,
For either of them—or for Handel.”

Many a composer has indulged in a bit of harmless self-advertising. The 18th-century French composer Grétry had the habit, on evenings when his operas were to be performed, of walking along the street and, whenever he met a group of people, of stopping them to say: “I see they are playing Grétry’s *Epreuve* tonight. I must see it! I hear it’s wonderful!”

In the next century Meyerbeer was also notorious for rhapsodizing over his own music. Commented the poet Heinrich Heine: “When Meyerbeer is dead, who will look after his glory?”

Rameau, the French master who lived in the 17th century, was one of the great pioneers of French opera. Because he departed from the Italian tradition he was often criticized by his contemporaries for being complex and cerebral. They made up a ditty about him, which was quite popular in the Paris of his time:

“If the difficult is pretty,
What a great man is Rameau!
If, by chance, whate’er is witty
Must be simple, then I know
He is but a *little* man!”

Rameau’s personality was subjected to even more savage criticism than his music was. Truth to tell, he was loud-voiced, ill-mannered, uncouth. He spoke his mind openly at all times, at the expense of tact,

and his comments were invariably acidulous. He loved money passionately, and was notorious throughout Paris as a miser.

On his deathbed, as he listened to the priest intone a prayer for him, he caustically reproved the holy man for being out of tune!

Cherubini, an Italian opera composer who achieved a position of no little importance in Paris early in the 19th century, went to a rehearsal of a new Halévy opera. "What do you think of it, Master?" Halévy asked him eagerly. Cherubini remained silent. "But, Master, haven't you *anything* to say?" Halévy urged. "Why should I say anything," Cherubini replied at last, "if, after you have spoken to me for two full hours, you yourself have said absolutely nothing!"

When Gluck's *Alceste* was first performed in Paris it was a dismal failure—though a few far-sighted musicians recognized it for the masterpiece it really was. Heartbroken, Gluck ran out into the street after the performance, and there met one of his friends who had heard the opera. "My friend," exclaimed Gluck, "*Alceste* has fallen!" The other replied, "Yes, fallen—from heaven!"

The double-bass virtuoso Dragonetti, a friend of Beethoven, had a strange passion for dolls. His house was cluttered with them, and he took one with him wherever he went, introducing it to everybody as his wife.

Carl Maria von Weber's friends always called him "Cabbage Salad." Deeply religious, Weber never conducted a concert without first dropping to his knees before the conductor's stand, in full sight of his audience, and praying for a few minutes.

Mindful of the fact that his father had been a famous philosopher, and that his son was a famous composer, Abraham Mendelssohn (ever conscious of his own mediocrity) often remarked: "Formerly I was the son of my father. Now I am the father of my son."

Felix Mendelssohn had a remarkable memory: he could glance at a composition and photograph it in his mind, or examine a complex musical score a few times and know its subtlest details. At one soirée, for example, a pianist offered to play a Beethoven concerto. Without hesitation, Mendelssohn sat down at a second piano and performed the entire orchestral accompaniment from memory. A contemporary organist once heard words of praise sounded for Mendelssohn's unusual retentiveness. "That isn't art," he insisted. "I could do the same thing—if I didn't always forget everything."

Ferdinand David, a composer of five violin concertos, was selected by Mendelssohn to give the world première of the master's celebrated E minor Concerto. After this performance Robert Schumann said to David, "At last, David, you have the concerto you've been trying to write."

Spohr, another famous violinist—and a conductor and composer to boot—was asked by a younger composer for an opinion on one of his works. "Well," answered Spohr deliberately, "I find in your work much that is good and new." But before the young musician had time to savor the sweet praise, Spohr elaborated: "Only—what is good in it is not new, and what is new is not good."

Berlioz, who was many years ahead of his time in the art of instrumentation, produced complicated scores calling for large masses of instruments. Chopin had an explanation of Berlioz' method. Picking up a quill pen, Chopin bent it backwards, then let fly, spattering the music paper with ink-blots and splashes. "*That's* the way Berlioz composes," explained Chopin. "He lets the notes fall where they will—leaves it to chance—and the result often surprises even him!"

Chopin was one of the most celebrated pianists of his time in Paris, a great favorite of the salons, and often invited to parties—where the hostess usually counted on him for music. At one of these functions he

played only one short number. "Is that *all* you are going to play?" the hostess inquired. "But, madam," Chopin answered, "I ate *so* little!"

Once when the famous hostess of a Parisian salon invited Chopin to a soirée, she jestingly added that he was not to "forget to bring the piano." Her party was rudely interrupted by the arrival of Chopin's piano carried by four men. Hanging from it was a note in Chopin's hand: "Here is my piano, madam. Don't ask it to play—we both decided to enjoy a pleasant evening."

Antonin Dvořák was afraid of thunderstorms. When a storm was coming on he would blanch, call off all lessons, and refuse to see anybody. He would just sit at his piano and try to drown out the sound of the thunderclaps with loud chords.

He had a boyish interest in trains and ships. His greatest pleasure was to loiter for hours at a time at docks and in railroad stations. In Prague, he got to know the trains so well that he could tell which engine was coming by the sound of its bell or whistle; he was intimately acquainted with every engineer. When he was in New York, he would often disappear for hours, only to be found day-dreaming at Grand Central Station or down watching the New York harbor.

He always jumped at the opportunity of seeing people off at railroad stations or docks. Usually, these people were flattered to think that Dvořák was so friendly and considerate; only his best friends knew that he went in order to see the train or the boat, and not the departing traveler.

The citizens of Prague once brought Dvořák a laurel wreath marked "To the Greatest Composer in the World." When they next visited him, they found it resting securely—on the brow of a bust of Beethoven.

Anton Rubinstein never ate a meal that did not include cucumbers.

Shortly before the première of one of his operas, Rubinstein promised the musicians and singers a regal feast if the opera were well liked. The première, however, was a dismal failure, and Rubinstein, heartbroken, left before the end. A few hours later, he was awakened at his home by three men of the orchestra who came demanding their feast. "But it was a failure," protested Rubinstein. "Maybe so," they answered; "but *we* liked it!"

Glinka, the father of Russian nationalist music, had a psychopathic fear of death. He was an incurable hypochondriac, eager for any and every known remedy, tonic, or palliative. He forbade aromatic foods at his table or in his dishes because he had heard that they were injurious to the health; but his cook often disregarded the order. Once, finding a bayleaf in his soup, he fastidiously lifted it out and put it on the table in front of him, saying, "I dislike bayleaves—either in my soup or on my head."

Because tea had a bad effect on Borodin, he used to drink it out of tiny cups. But of these he would drink an infinite number, each time passing the cup along the table to his wife—to her great inconvenience and that of their guests. "It gives me the illusion of drinking a great deal," he explained. Then as an afterthought, he added: "And, of course, I do!"

When Tchaikovsky was a boy of seven beginning his studies, he once opened his geography book to the map of Europe, kissed the map of Russia—and proceeded to spit on all the other countries. This shocked the child's French governess, who protested that in other countries there lived children like himself, and that it was cruel to express hatred for those countries. "You would have to hate me, too," she added, "since I am not Russian but French." "Oh, no," replied Peter. "Didn't you see that while I was spitting I covered up the map of France with my hand?"

Tchaikovsky kept a diary very methodically, but often the only entry for the day was one simple word: *Drunk*.

Verdi often lamented the fact that he had not been endowed by Nature with a strong constitution. "If only I were stronger physically!" he once remarked wistfully. "What would have happened to you if you were?" a friend asked. "Well, if I were stronger, I'd probably be a farmer instead of a composer."

A young opera composer came to Verdi for advice. He showed the master a scene he was about to set to music and went into a lengthy explanation of the style he would adopt—the technique, the materials, the form. "Is that what you, too, would do with that, Master?" he asked. Verdi answered: "No. I would just sit down and write a little music."

An organ grinder stood under Verdi's window playing selections from *Il Trovatore*. Verdi stuck his head out and told the performer he was playing too loudly. The next day the grinder reappeared. On his instrument now hung a card reading: "Verdi's pupil."

Gounod worshipped Mozart more than any other composer. In his old age, he confessed: "When I was very young, I used to say *I*. Later on, I said, *I and Mozart*. Then—*Mozart and I*. Now, I say only—*Mozart*."

Saint-Saëns was asked to accompany the singing of two young girls in a duet. He stopped in the middle of the first number and asked sweetly: "Which one of you shall I accompany?"

Modern Music Started Riots

IN OUR day, we take modern music, even the sterner kind, very much in our stride. We like it, or we dislike it, but we don't allow it to upset us greatly. It wasn't so very long ago, however, that a modern work could unleash a storm to shake the world; and a modern composer could evoke passions intense enough to split a musical society into two factions.

When Arnold Schönberg's *Gurre-Lieder* was introduced in Vienna in 1913, the conflicting opinions it aroused in the audience were violent enough to touch off a veritable riot. Fist fights ensued. People started throwing things at one another. One woman became hysterical; another fainted. The reverberations of this concert were still felt some years later—and hundreds of miles away. In the Berlin law courts, one of the men of that audience brought suit against another for assault. In that case, a witness explained that he had laughed himself sick during the concert because the music was funny, and he always laughed at funny things. Another witness, a prominent physician, testified that the music was so nerve-racking that many who had been present at the concert were already showing signs of neuroses!

Today, Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* is one of the classics in the orchestral repertory. But when it was introduced in 1895, one writer said that it was a "vast and coruscating jumble of instrument-cackle about things unfit to be mentioned." Some went so far as to describe it as "an hour of music in an insane asylum." Strauss was vilified personally, and some of the attacks on him were so violent that in self-defense he threatened to seek the protection of the courts.

When Prokofiev's *Scythian Suite* was first heard—this was in 1916—the music so shocked its hearers that many fancied themselves personally insulted. The celebrated Russian teacher and composer,

Glazunov, fled from the concert hall in horror, pressing his hands over his ears to shut out Prokofiev's barbaric dissonances. One of the violinists in the orchestra was overheard to say: "My wife is sick, and I've got to buy some medicine. Otherwise, I wouldn't play this crazy music."

One of the leading music critics of Moscow, Leonid Sabaneyev, was unmasked by this composition. In a newspaper "review" he attacked the music violently, calling it the work of a barbarian; the way Prokofiev had conducted it, he added, was execrable. The only mistake Sabaneyev made was to write and publish this review *without* attending the concert, and *before* discovering that it had been postponed for a few days. When Prokofiev proved that the only existing copy of the music had stayed in his hands and therefore could not have been seen by Sabaneyev, the incident entertained Moscow music circles immensely; it also helped to stimulate interest in and sympathy for the much-abused composer.

Perhaps the most tempestuous performance of our time was the première of Stravinsky's *Rites of Spring* by the Diaghilev Ballet in Paris in 1913. As this strange, new, and seemingly confused music unfolded under the baton of Pierre Monteux, snickers and smothered hoots were clearly heard in the audience. The merriment grew, soon broken into by vigorous expressions of disapproval. Then the storm broke. Catcalls resounded. Some began brazenly to shout their disgust. One man, directly behind Carl Van Vechten, stood up and began to beat his fists rhythmically on the top of the novelist's head. One lady, in a box, reached to the adjoining box to slap the face of a man who hissed. (Her escort exchanged calling cards with the slapped man, and the two of them fought a duel the following morning.) The Austrian Ambassador bellowed laughter, while the composer Florent Schmitt bitterly excoriated him for his intolerance. The elderly Princess de Pourtalès left the auditorium in a huff, exclaiming: "This is the first time that anyone has dared to make a fool out of me!" Another celebrated society matron spat in the face of one of the demonstrators. Saint-Saëns cried out that the music was a fake, and he was seconded by the critic, André Capu. Maurice Ravel, almost in tears, protested



that it was a work of genius. Through it all, Debussy was pleading with the audience to calm down and listen to the music with tolerance. The pandemonium was so great that there were very few indeed who heard more than a dozen bars of the score that evening.

Walter Damrosch used to conduct special concerts in New York which he entitled "Modern Music—Pleasant and Unpleasant." At one of these concerts there was played a terribly noisy concerto for two reed instruments (in two different keys) by the French composer Poulenc. The audience began by laughing—then took to hissing. In the middle of all this, Walter Damrosch turned around to the audience, winked, and whispered audibly: "I don't understand it, either."

Although the première of Alban Berg's expressionistic opera *Wozzeck* was comparatively successful in Berlin in 1925, its unusual idiom inspired no end of bitter criticism. One Berlin critic, Max Marschall, accused the composer outright of being plain crazy. "Berg is the creator of sounds terrifying to the ear. As I was leaving the State Opera I had the sensation of having been not in a public theater but in an insane asylum. On the stage, in the orchestra, in the stalls—absolute madmen!"

A year later, *Wozzeck* was introduced in Prague, where it inspired such riots among the audiences that the police ordered its withdrawal from the repertory in order to safeguard the peace.

When George Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique*—a work that calls for whirring motors, strident airplane propellers, and the like—was introduced at Carnegie Hall twenty years ago, one man in the audience stood up while the work was in progress and raised his cane high in the air. Attached to the cane was a white handkerchief.

P r i n c e I g o r

THE story goes that, at the première of Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, an old lady who was slightly deaf was listening to the music through her ear trumpet. When the dissonances came, she removed the listening device, shook it, blew out some dust, cleaned it with a handkerchief, and replaced it at her ear. By this time, the more melodious and lyrical sections had returned. She sat back smiling, confident now that her trumpet was in working order again.

George Gershwin, then visiting Paris, went to Stravinsky to ask for lessons in composition. "How much do you earn?" Stravinsky asked him. "Oh, about a hundred thousand dollars a year," answered Gershwin. "In that case," was Stravinsky's decision, "it is *I* who should take lessons from *you*."

One of the most famous portraits of Stravinsky is a line drawing by Picasso. Stravinsky was stopped by the authorities at the Italian border because, finding this picture in his baggage, they decided it must be a map of Italy's secret fortifications.

Two would-be critics were discussing the merits and demerits of modern composers. "Stravinsky!" exclaimed the first one. "Stravinsky is no good. Why, the only decent music he ever wrote was *Bolero*!" "But, Mischa," returned the other, "Stravinsky didn't write *Bolero*—Ravel wrote it." "SEE!—" shouted the first "critic" triumphantly. "Stravinsky didn't even write *that*!"

King Richard II

RICHARD STRAUSS'S father, Franz Strauss, was a celebrated horn player. An enemy of Wagner's music, he expressed his sentiments openly. Once, while playing in an orchestra rehearsed by Wagner himself, Franz Strauss suddenly rose and rudely left the orchestra pit in the very middle of a passage—because he was offended by the music. On another occasion, he played a passage so beautifully that Wagner was tempted to remark: "A man who can play that way cannot possibly hate the music he is playing." To this, Franz Strauss retorted: "My performance has nothing whatsoever to do with the way I feel about the music!"

Had Wagner lived, he would have been the first to enjoy this crowning irony: Franz Strauss's gifted son, Richard, became one of the most passionate disciples of the Wagnerian music dramas, and one of their most famous interpreters.

Richard Strauss was once given a testimonial dinner in Budapest. Introducing him, a toastmaster referred to him as "the Buddha of modern music." "If I am the Buddha of modern music," whispered Strauss, "then our toastmaster is its Pest." (This is an example of the few puns in a foreign language that translate into English perfectly—*Buddha* and *Pest* having the same meaning and pronunciation in both German and English.)

Richard Strauss had always been strongly dominated by his iron-willed wife. When he dallied too long in the garden, she would call to him sternly, "Now, Richard, you'd better return to your composition!" He would obey her meekly, much like a recalcitrant student being ordered to the piano by his mother.

At a social affair in Berlin that Strauss attended, an attractive young woman asked him to dance with her. "I would love to," he said, his face reddening with embarrassment, "but I am sure my wife would not permit it."

Strauss's pleasures have been of a simple character—drinking beer and playing cards (particularly a Bavarian game called *Skat*). Sometimes, while playing cards or entertaining his friends, he would get melodic ideas which he would immediately jot down in his notebook; one of the most inspired waltz melodies for *Der Rosenkavalier* came to him during a card game.

He is a shrewd businessman, with an almost unhealthy passion for accumulating money. Though he has made a fortune in his time, he has always been niggardly about spending. In Paris, after the première of his ballet *Josephs Legende*, he gave a sumptuous feast at Larue for his musician and writer friends and for the members of the ballet—much to their amazement, for they were well aware of his parsimonious nature. Their amazement, however, was transformed into fury when, at the end of the feast, each guest was handed his own check for the food he had eaten, and all his drinks.

G e r s h w i n P è r e

GEORGE GERSHWIN'S father was a moon-faced, mild-mannered little man who achieved a certain measure of fame (or notoriety) with a humor that was as ingenuous as it was unconscious. Most of the time he did not suspect how funny were the simplicities he uttered. For years, stories about Papa Gershwin were circulated up and down Broadway, and at one time there was even talk of collecting them into a volume.

Whenever George composed late at night, Papa would park on the stairs, directly outside George's study. There he would sit and listen, sometimes for hours. If the piano inside played without interruption, Papa Gershwin was happy—he knew that all was going well with George's inspiration. But if the playing proceeded by fits and starts he would be in agony, realizing that George was in trouble. Once the

piano was silent for so long that Papa simply couldn't stand the suspense. Sticking his chubby face around the half-open door, he hurriedly whistled a snatch of melody and asked, "Does that help you, George?"

Told that the Einstein theory of relativity had taken twenty years to develop, and yet in print covered only three pages, Papa Gershwin's comment was: "It must have been very close print."

In the early days of the radio, when the miracles of the crystal set were topics of everyday conversation, Papa Gershwin boasted that he could clearly hear Cleveland and South America on his set. "Not South America, surely!" exclaimed George skeptically. "Well, Cleveland, positively!" snapped back Papa.

To a critic, Papa Gershwin boasted about a "very important article" that had been written about George. He couldn't remember the name of the author. "Then how do you know it was important?" Papa was asked. "Because," was Papa's answer, "the magazine cost me thirty-five cents."

Papa Gershwin once told George that he particularly liked one of the numbers George had written for the *Scandals*, but he couldn't remember which one it was. Touched by his father's praise, and curious to know which melody had struck his fancy, George played for him the hit-tune of the show, "Somebody Loves Me." Papa shook his head; that wasn't it. George plodded through the entire score, playing all the other twenty numbers in it. At each of them, Papa shook his head. After about an hour of searching his memory for any other tune that might possibly have appeared in the score, George absently let his fingers stray casually across the keys and accidentally played again a few bars from "Somebody Loves Me." "*That's it!*" shouted Papa. "That's it! Why in the name of heaven didn't you play it in the first place?"

George's close friends tried to convey to Papa that the *Rhapsody in Blue* was a masterpiece. "Of course it's great music," said Papa with assurance. "Doesn't it take fifteen minutes to perform?"

K i n g G e o r g e

GEORGE GERSHWIN himself had a streak of naïveté not unlike his father's. One of his weaknesses was a fondness for playing his own music on any and every occasion and with the slightest encouragement. Chided by his mother for continually playing his own music at every party he attended, George answered: "I can't help it, Ma—if I don't play my music, I don't enjoy the party."

During the arduous rehearsals of *Porgy and Bess*, Rouben Mamoulian, director of the production, and several others decided to take a well-earned rest from the opera, which was beginning to drive them to distraction. When they returned from this brief vacation, Mamoulian was asked: "What did' you do for three days?" "Can't you guess?" answered Mamoulian wearily. "For three days, George sat at the piano—playing the score of *Porgy*."

Once, when George was particularly generous with a long performance of his own music for his friends, accompanying it with an elaborate commentary on his career, his experiences, his hopes and ideals, Oscar Levant asked him acidly:* "Tell me, George, if you had to do it all over again, would you still fall in love with yourself?"

George was inordinately proud of his parents, especially of his mother. "She is the kind of woman to whom composers write mammy songs. Only—I *mean* them." In a tender mood, George once went into a rhapsodic recital of her many virtues. "And what is more," he said at the end, "she is *so* modest about me."

* From "A Smattering of Ignorance" by Oscar Levant, copyrighted 1939, 1940 by Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc.



Gershwin

Early in life George decided to learn what he could about harmony, and entered the class of Rubin Goldmark. One day he brought the master a string quartet which he had written months before he had entered the class. "Very good," said Goldmark. "I see that you have already learned a great deal in this course."

On his trip to Europe, Gershwin (then in London) discovered that his *Rhapsody in Blue* was being performed that evening in Paris. He hopped on a plane and arrived just in time to acknowledge the enthusiastic applause of the audience. Deems Taylor was there, but—knowing that Gershwin had not been in Paris lately—he was surprised to see him suddenly on the stage. However, remarked Taylor, "You can always count on George to be around when there's a bow to be taken!"

P o t p o u r r i

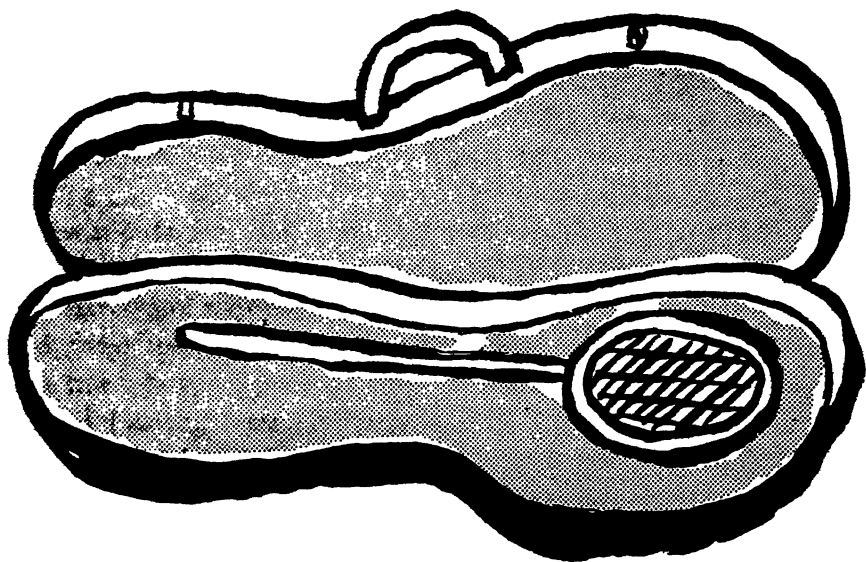
ONE of Hindemith's early operas, *Tuttifantchen*, proved to be such an inept union of libretto and music that soon after its première a quip circulated through Germany quoting the composer as saying: "Never again, as long as I live, will I compose an opera whose text I haven't read!"

Capsule criticisms:

Of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, with its thunderous first movement, one critic remarked: "For Shostakovich, life begins at *forte*."

In reviewing one of the early radical and dissonant works of Marc Blitzstein, a Philadelphia reviewer remarked that it was "full of Donner and Blitzstein."

Oscar Levant, discussing a new work by a young composer, said: "It's not an inspiration. It's a reminiscence."



When Arnold Schönberg went to Los Angeles, he was met at the railroad station by a friend. The latter pointed to the violin case Schönberg was holding onto carefully. "Stradivarius?" the friend asked. "No," Schönberg answered, "Alex Taylor." The case held his precious tennis rackets.

Schönberg was playing tennis with George Gershwin when suddenly he asked to be let off. "I wonder what can be making me so tired today," he said. Then he stopped—"Oh, yes," he went on; "I remember now—I had to get up at five this morning because my wife gave birth to a baby."

The home of Italy's famous composer, Malipiero, at Asolo is full of oddities. When you ring the doorbell, the sound is prolonged and shrill—as if the bell had slipped and had established a permanent contact. "That's done purposely," explains the composer, "to keep timid admirers rooted to the ground until the maid has a chance to

open the door. Otherwise, some of them suddenly get so terrified at the thought of meeting me that they run away." Inside the house, a prominent sign immediately greets the visitor. It reads: "*Do not trust your host. You can never be quite sure who he really is.*" A moment later, if you try to go upstairs to Malipiero's study, you stumble awkwardly over a false step that is cleverly painted at the foot of the stairway and is truly deceptive. "Sometimes people who visit me are half asleep," comments Malipiero. "When they fall over that false step, they are suddenly waked up before they reach my studio."

Malipiero once decided to raise his own chickens, so that he might get them fresh from his coop for his Sunday dinner table. But he grew so attached to them that not only did he refuse to have them killed for food but also, when one of them fell sick, he himself tenderly nursed it back to health. Since the day he bought his coop, no fowl of any kind has appeared on the Malipiero table.

Lorenzo Perosi, the famous Italian church composer, used to make a practice of memorizing every Italian railroad timetable, and he could tell you exactly where every train in Italy was at any given moment.

Maurice Ravel also went in for boyish pastimes. He entertained his friends with an explosive trick he called "the seasick Chinaman"—performed with an orange and a napkin. He also liked to indulge with friends in a game of his own invention called "Water War": dressed in raincoats they would throw water-heavy sponges at each other. Once caught at this game, he explained to the puzzled onlooker that he was simply enacting his own piano composition, *Jeux d'eau*!

When Prokofiev was ten years old, he showed one of his manuscripts to the famous teacher and composer, Tanciev. The latter told him: "You will have to develop a more interesting harmony." Eleven years later, Prokofiev—now the iconoclast, and one of the most modern composers of his time—again showed Tanciev some of his manuscripts. This time, the master was shocked by Prokofiev's audacious use of

harmonies and tonalities. When Tanciev threw this music aside with disgust, Prokofiev told him: "I merely followed your advice, Master. When I was young you told me to develop a more interesting harmony—which I proceeded to do without delay."

Few composers of our generation have had such eclectic minds or such wide interests as Edward Elgar. He liked gardening and fishing; when he fished, he rarely caught anything, and when he did he always threw the fish back into the water. He had more than a layman's knowledge of science, architecture, woodcraft, and chemistry. He was well versed in law, knew history, and had a formidable acquaintance with English literature.

He was an inveterate gambler on the horses, read the racing forms religiously every day, and when he couldn't get to the race-track would keep in touch with his bookie by telephone. He had a youthful zest for games of all sorts—cribbage, billiards, and puzzles particularly. He even took delight in playing that game so long dear to British youth, "Beaver": as he went along the streets with friends, the one who first caught sight of a bearded man shouted "Beaver!"—a black beard scoring one point, a red beard three.

Unusual orchestration is expected in most scores today. Many modern composers, however, have gone so far as to introduce the most untraditional "instruments" into their orchestration. A typewriter is operated in Ferdé Grofé's *Tabloid*. George Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique* calls for anvils, airplane propellers, electric bells, automobile horns, and sixteen player-pianos. In Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote* there appears a wind machine. Respighi's *The Pines of Rome* enlists the services of a phonograph record. Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* calls for an out-of-tune upright piano. In George Gershwin's *An American in Paris* a real klaxon from a Paris taxicab is sounded. An Italian modernist, by the name of Luigi Russolo, wrote a work calling for bumlbers, gurglers, thunderers, whistlers, and even one snorer. A Suite by Nicolas Slonimsky demands among other instruments a portable typewriter and a cat's meow!

Marc Blitzstein achieved his first great success with his opera *The Cradle Will Rock*. It is in this work that he replaced the traditional accompanying orchestra with a piano, playing it himself in full view of the audience and making brief comments on the action of the play—which proceeded without benefit of stage sets or costumes.

When the opera became a great hit on Broadway, the Musicians' Union insisted that ten musicians be paid \$100 a week each, even though there was no need for their services. Blitzstein acquiesced, and made up an orchestra of four cornetists, three flutists, and three trombones. "What a strange orchestra!" remarked a friend. "That," answered Blitzstein, "is the orchestra I want to have NOT play my opera."

Erich Wolfgang Korngold, now a prosperous composer in Hollywood, years ago was a sensational prodigy whose operas and orchestral music were widely performed. Incidentally, he was the son of Vienna's most influential music critic, Dr. Julius Korngold. In those days the following quip was circulated in Vienna:

A. What are you going to play at your next concert?

B. Young Korngold's sonata.

A. Is he grateful?

B. No—but his father will be.

One of the innovations instituted in Cleveland by the conductor Artur Rodzinski was a series of "readings" of new American works during rehearsals. The works were listened to by a jury of musicians and critics, and those they singled out for commendation were played on the orchestra's regular programs. At one of these rehearsal-readings, all the members of the jury except one were particularly virulent in their denunciation of a work just heard. One of them turned to the silent man and wanted to know why he wasn't expressing any opinion. "I can't," he answered simply. "I wrote it."

Few modern musical works have had such dramatic (and peripatetic) histories as Bohuslav Martinu's Concerto Grosso. Written in Paris in 1937, it was scheduled for performance and publication in

Vienna the following year. Came the *Anschluss*—and both projects collapsed. The work was then scheduled for performance in Prague. But in the political upheaval following the Munich pact it was neglected and forgotten. Next, the work was assigned to Paris, for performance in May, 1940. Just before the concert date, Paris yielded to the Nazis. Martinu fled for his life, and in his hurry he left behind him the second of two copies of this work; the first had already disappeared before this time. In America, Martinu learned that the conductor George Szell had the first copy in his possession, having come upon it in Prague. At last, the work seemed about to be performed, since it was accepted by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Misfortune, however, still dogged its steps. The copying of the manuscript proved so difficult that, at the last moment, the première had to be postponed. It was ultimately heard, however, on November 14, 1941, in Boston.

Percy Grainger once went to great pains to explain to Ellington that the Duke's hot music revealed the influence of Delius. For the rest of that evening the Duke was glum—and still glum as he sat in the taxi with a friend on his way home, deep in thought. "What's the matter, Duke?" his friend asked. "Something on your mind?" The Duke growled: "He said I was influenced by Delius." "But that's no crime," the friend told him; "every great composer is influenced by other great composers." "It's not that," explained the Duke. "It's just that I never heard of Delius."

After that, the Duke bought all the Delius records, and he would play them over and over again, announcing proudly, "That's my influence!"



